Wii

NiGHTS REVIEWED: WHY EVERYONE MUST PLAY THIS GAME!

20th ANNIVERSARY

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- SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
- APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY
- ENDLESS OCEAN
- ALONE IN THE DARK
- DRAGON QUEST SWORDS
- MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES (DS)

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JANUARY 2008/V224

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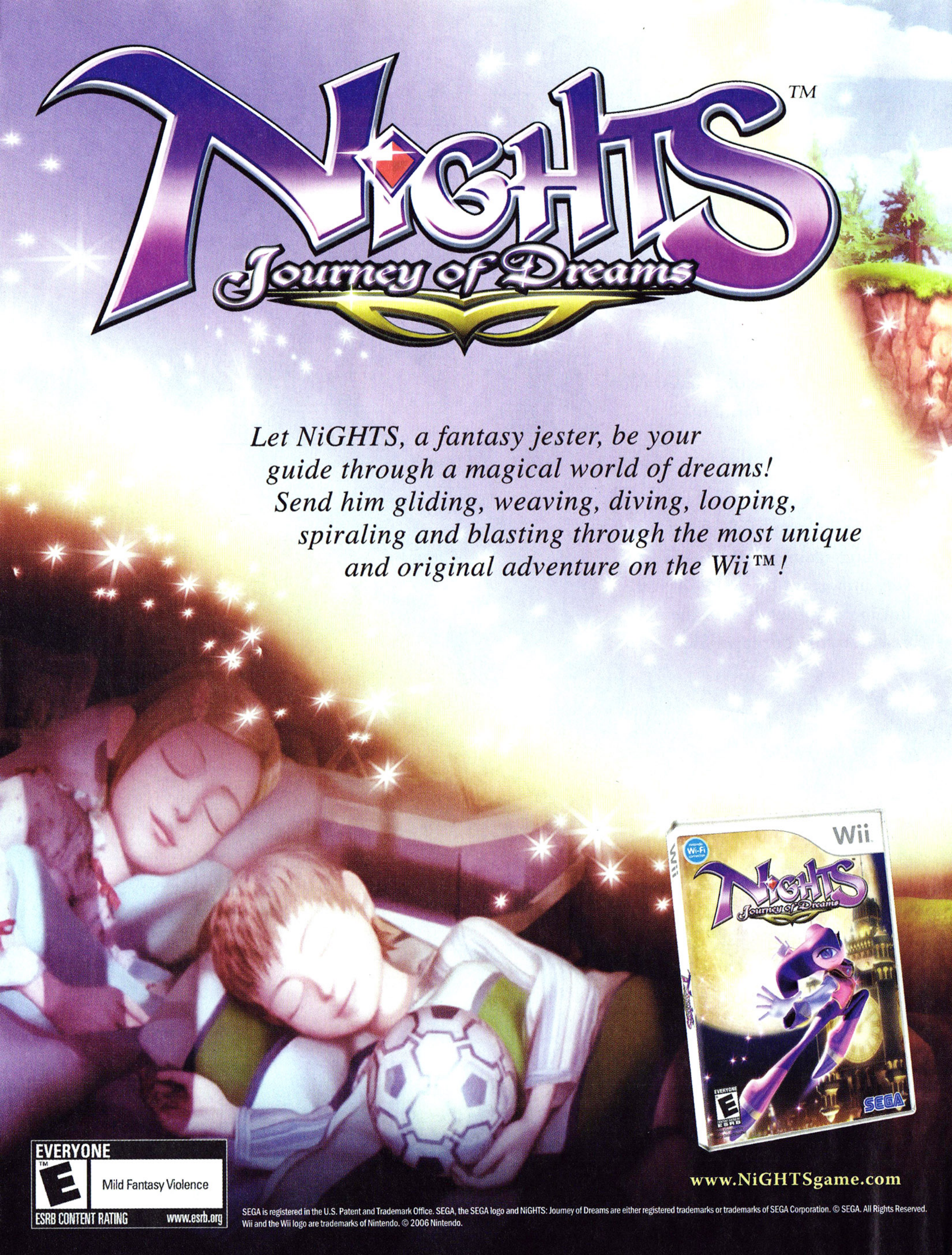
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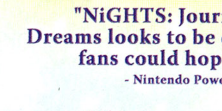

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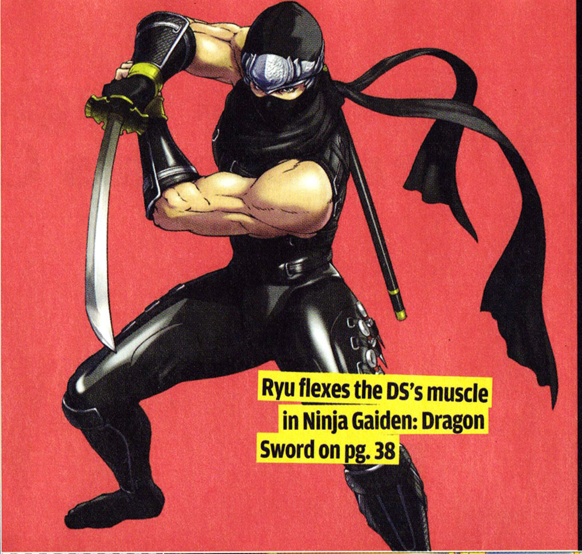

Ryu flexes the DS's muscle in Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword on pg. 38

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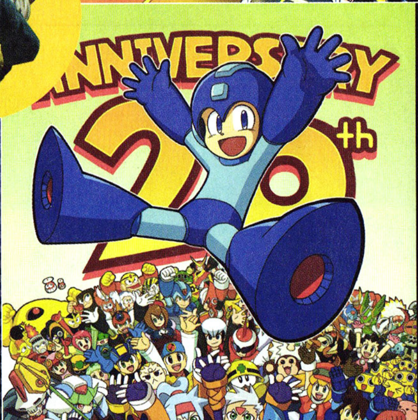
Unsheathe your Wii remote and clash swords in the new Dragon Quest.

Train to become the ultimate ninja on page 46!



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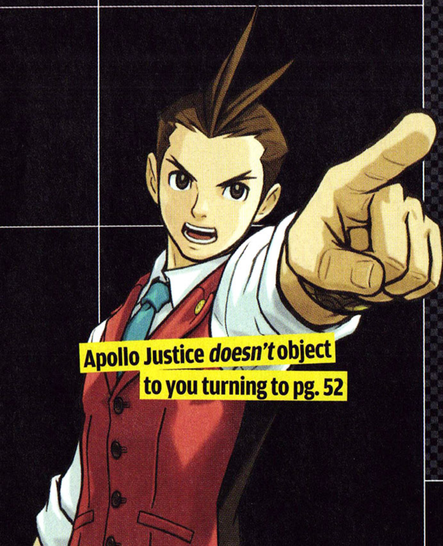
You're invited to our belated birthday bash for the Blue Bomber.



Apollo Justice *doesn't* object to you turning to pg. 52

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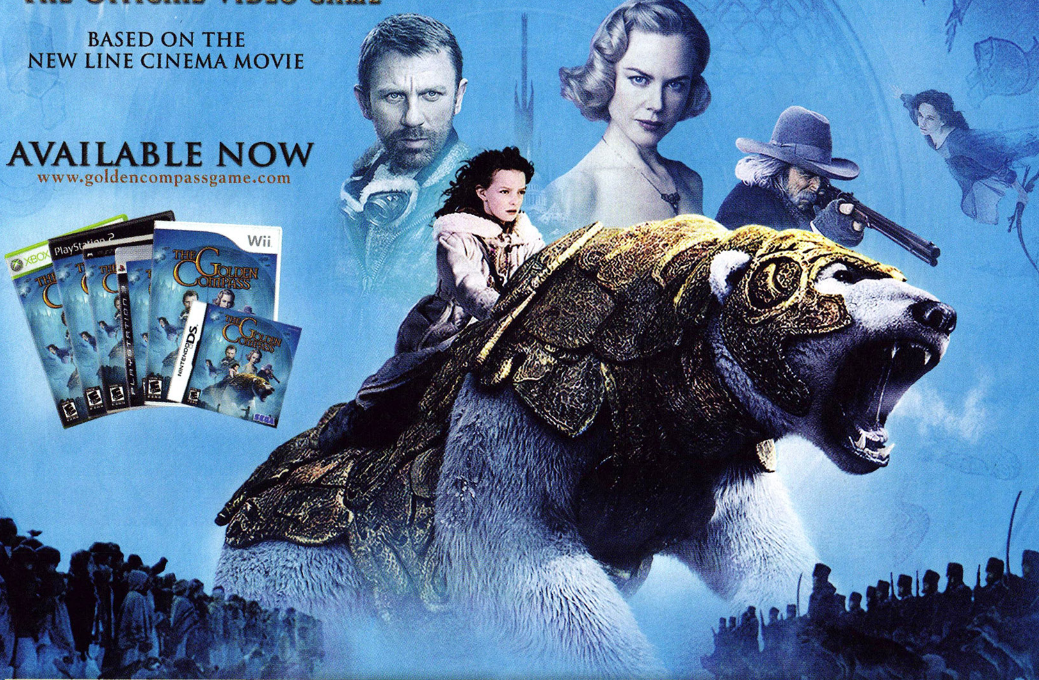
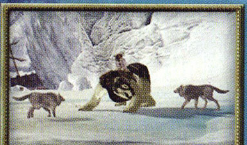


Pan's shape-shifting abilities give Lyra total freedom to explore.



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NINTENDO POWER

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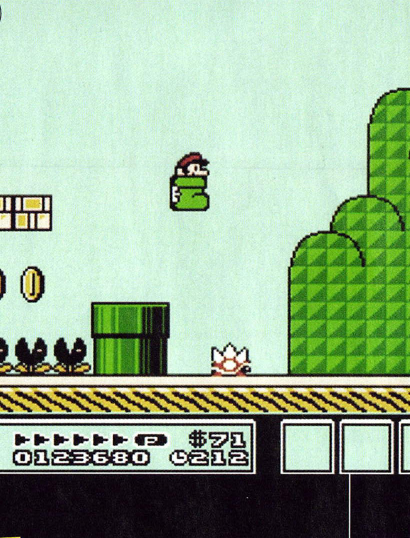

When the aliens attack, we want her on our side. Pg. 94

WHOSE TEAM ARE YOU ON?

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TEAM MARIO
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TEAM MARIO
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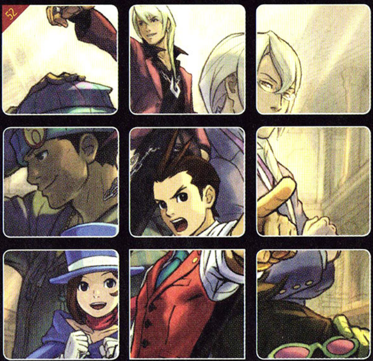
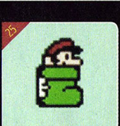
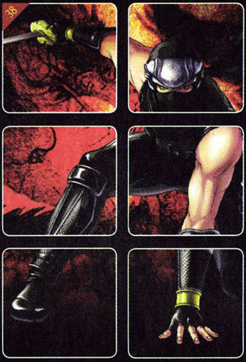
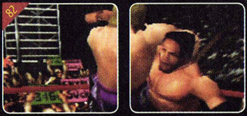
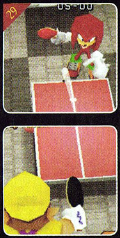
DS = Nintendo DS
NES = Nintendo Entertainment System
N64 = Nintendo 64
VC = Virtual Console
Wii = Wii











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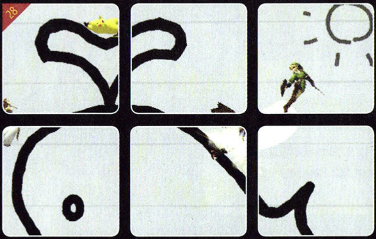
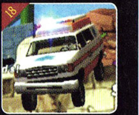
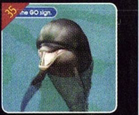
DETONATOR







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Wii

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Pulse

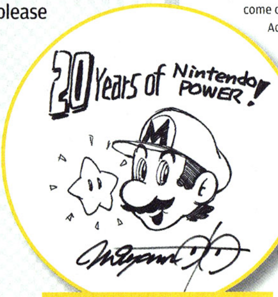
A SPECIAL YEAR

Ah, our first issue of 2008—the year that Nintendo Power turns 20! You probably noticed the 20th Anniversary badge on the cover, and the celebration continues on the inside with a new section that looks back at classic Nintendo Power moments. Both will run all year long, and in the summer we'll kick the party into overdrive with a special 20th Anniversary issue. We're already planning a bunch of big surprises, so please look forward to it!

To start the year off with a bang, we based our cover story on one of our most anticipated games—Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword. The series that made its name on the NES is staging a triumphant return to the world of Nintendo with a DS title that delivers not only top-notch ninja action, but also revolutionary stylus control. Trust me—you've never seen wall-jumping and ninja magic done like this! We delve deeper into the game than anyone ever has to bring you the definitive preview.

With the Wii and DS roaring along at full steam, 2008 should be another banner year for Nintendo gamers. Right away we'll get Smash Bros. in February, and we'll be racing online this spring in the new Mario Kart for Wii. Now *that's* how you kick off a new year!

Chris Slate
Editor in Chief


20 Years of Nintendo POWER!

Nintendo Power's very first 20th anniversary birthday card comes from none other than Shigeru Miyamoto—and it's hand drawn, no less!

LETTERS

Chris Slate here, back to answer more of your questions between turns at Link's Crossbow Training. (I apologize in advance if I accidentally type "ARGH!" or "STUPID MOVING TARGET!" during the next few pages.) This month, anyone who didn't include a name with their letter will be called "Slippy." I'm sorry, but some of you need a lesson in manners and we're all about tough love here in the Pulse section.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Hi, Future US! I wanted to thank you for doing a great job with NP and not ruining it. But especially, I'd like to say thanks for putting the mag in a plastic bag, which kept in my favorite smell: freshly printed ink.

Scott C.

Stay away from the markers, Scott.

TIME MARCHES ON

Do you know if any more games will come out for the Game Boy Advance or the GameCube? All you talk about are DS and Wii games, but I only have a GBA and GameCube. Whenever I beg my parents for a new system they always say that they don't have the money, but then they turn around and give my brother everything he asks for! Please tell me that more games are coming for my systems!

sakurafan_121

Sorry, but the GameCube and GBA are just too old for Nintendo to make new games for them, especially while the company is putting all of its efforts into supporting the red-hot Wii and DS. And besides, your brother asked us not to cover those systems anymore, and it's impossible to say no to that guy!

FUN WITH WORDS

In the Writers' Block section of the December 2007 issue, Chris Slate said that he wanted to play Super Smash Bros. Brawl over the holidays. Now that the game has been delayed, what are his new plans? Personally, I'm going to play Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn because it's super-awesome-cool (my phrase, don't steal it).

Adam D.

I've got a stack of games that I've been dying to finish, like the mega-crazy-rad Metroid Prime 3, the uber-ultra-killer Phantom Hourglass, and the super-sweet-sweetness Zack & Wiki. Those games are just gnarly-sick-hot-to-the-extreme.

WHERE'S THE INNOVATION?

For all of Nintendo's innovations as a hardware manufacturer, its innovation in games leaves much to be desired. I know that its franchises are among the most revered in gaming, but what was innovative 20 years ago isn't necessarily innovative now. I'm not saying that I don't want the Marios and Zeldas—I love those games. But I am tired of Nintendo feeding us the same games over and over, slapping a new feature on them, and declaring them "revolutionary." When I look at the games on other systems (i.e., Rock Band, Viva Piñata, Katamari Damacy, and even Gears of War), I see awesome ideas that are incredibly fun. Why can't Nintendo create some new and exciting franchises?

Robert A.

While I'd also love to see Nintendo experiment with more brand-new franchises along the lines of Pikmin and Animal Crossing, I don't think that you're giving Nintendo enough credit for its gameplay innovations. Take a look at Super Mario Galaxy—yes, it's another Mario game, but it adds some radically new elements to the platform genre. Nintendo usually puts a lot more innovation into its sequels than most other publishers—and don't overlook games like Wii Sports, which I would definitely call revolutionary. If you're in the mood for something other than Nintendo's brand of games, don't forget that most of the same third-party publishers who make games for those other consoles create games for Wii and DS.

BAD MEMORIES

What do you guys think is the worst video game of all time? Like, did a game ever get scored a -2?

TheWarl0ck

I usually rag on Sonic games just to cause our own Steve Thomason—the hedgehog's number-one fan—to make funny constipated faces. But in truth I love the Blue Blur, so my Worst-Ever Game award would go to a forgotten NES dud called The Adventures of Dino Riki. I was forced to play the game on Christmas Eve to meet a deadline, and not only is it no fun, but it's incredibly difficult. After each death I would try to break my NES pad in half to see if my anger gave me Hulk strength. Search for "Dino Riki" at YouTube to see the awfulness for yourself.

WHY THE NAME CHANGES?

Growing up playing video games, I always knew the characters as follows: Princess Toadstool, King Koopa, and Dr. Robotnik. But now, even for the old games on Virtual Console, they are being referred to as Peach, Bowser, and Dr. Eggman! What gives?! Did the game makers just recently find the actual translation of the names? Were the characters renamed because of a creative midlife crisis? Is there no reason behind the changes other than to make people like me wonder?

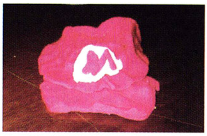
Jonathan B.

These characters have always had different names in Japan and America, and in recent years their US names were swapped to the Japanese originals. It just makes more sense for these characters to be known by the same names the world over, which makes you wonder why they were ever called something different in the first place.

"A" FOR EFFORT

Hey, guys, I'd just like to show you the Mario Hat that I made out of Play-Doh the other day!

Thomas R.



That's, er...special, Thomas. You keep reaching for the stars.

CAKE TEASE

I don't know if you remember, but last year I sent you a picture of a delicious 8-bit Mario cake. Well, this year I made an amazing Link cake. I Hope you like it!

Daniel M.

You don't send us an actual slice of your delicious cake, but a picture of it? Well, mission accomplished, Daniel—now I'm really craving cake and I don't have any. And now all of this thinking about cake has made me thirsty for milk, and we're out of that, too. What kind of sick game are you playing?

THE LANGUAGE OF Wii

I'm sure that you've heard plenty of stories of the Nintendo Wii bridging the age gap, but what about the language gap? A week ago, my German cousins were visiting—13- and 9-year-old girls—neither of whom speaks good English. Since my sister and I don't speak any German, I was worried that the night would be awkward. Luckily, we had the Wii. I booted up Wii Sports and it went over very well—my older cousin beat me in just her second game of bowling! Nintendo, I salute you for making a console that bridges the gap between all ages, genders, and languages!

AvatarJK

I love these kinds of stories. Personally, I've been to big family parties where everyone from little kids to grandparents got in on the Wii fun. My father-in-law is a pro at Wii Sports Bowling, and my five year-old second cousin has deadly aim in Link's Crossbow Training. It seems like a marketing cliché until you experience it in your own living room—Nintendo really has made a console for everyone.

JUST ENJOY GALAXY, OK?

I was playing Super Mario Galaxy when my Dad said to me, "You know, Mario can't be going on adventures forever. He should settle down in Italy, marry a nice woman, and have some kids." At first I dismissed it as a silly thought, but as he told me more, I started to agree! Could you pass this on to Miyamoto the next time you see him? Or possibly publish a line of Super Mario Super Romance novels? I guarantee that this would be a great business move, and when *Super Mario's Island of Love* is a bestseller, you'll have me to thank!

Michael H.

By any chance, did you or your dad create the Virtual Boy?

METROID DEFENCE FORCE

This is regarding TerryJr91's letter in Volume 222. Complaining that Metroid Prime 3 doesn't have a Wi-Fi multiplayer mode is like complaining that Solitaire doesn't have multiplayer. Metroid games are about Samus's bounty hunting adventures and the puzzle solving and exploration that go with them. It most certainly isn't the kind of blast-everything-in-sight shooter series that needs multiplayer.

CJ12

TerryJr91, I hate to break it to you, but we've received dozens of similar letters calling you out on this. There's only one way to settle this argument—online multiplayer Metroid deathmatch! Er, oops.

BOWLING FROM THE BOWL

My family was bowling in Wii Sports when my little brother had to go to the bathroom. His turn came up and he still hadn't come back yet. Suddenly, his Mii started to bowl! His remote wasn't missing, so we called to him and found out that he was bowling from the other room. He ended up getting a spare.

Zach M.

Wow, that's...cool? Or gross? Readers, you decide.

LIKE LOOKING IN A MIRROR

Chris Slate, you are living my dream! I, too, am a huge Nintendo fan, a Nintendo Power subscriber, and I'd love to someday work at Nintendo Power. Weird...you even look a bit like me, too.

Slippy

I thought all of the clones had been destroyed...

MAMA MIA

I think that a "Grand Theft Mario" game, like the one they made up in an episode of Robot Chicken, would be awesome. Drive a Mario Kart through town, smash turtles, run over people for coins—it'd be great! And with the Zapper you'd have a machine gun/fireball launcher, or you could connect two Wii remotes to dual-wield. Everybody would love it!

Slippy

Knowing what kind of guy Mario is, I don't think that the Grand Theft-style of gaming would be a good fit. I just can't see the mustachioed one running people over or gunning them down. An open-world mushroom city could be cool—just without the killings.

KEEP ON BRAWLIN'

In Volume 222 you didn't include the Wii Smash Files section—is it coming back in later issues? I really love that part of the magazine as it always tells me more about characters than I already knew. It'd be a shame to close this section down.

Roger G.

Don't worry, Roger—whether we publish Smash Files every month or not, we plan to continue covering Super Smash Bros. Brawl in various ways for a long time to come. That way we'll be able to justify all of the time we'll spend playing it every day!

FALSE POKéPROPHET

I heard a rumor that Pokémon Diamond/Pearl and Pokémon Battle Revolution were going to be the last Pokémon games. That would break

REVIEWS DEMYSTIFIED

How do you guys score the games that you review? If you tell us what points you base your ratings on, we can better understand your scoring.

Andrew Sharo

After reading that Metroid Prime 3 is the first game to ever score a 10 in Nintendo Power, it made me wonder how you rated Ocarina of Time. I know that Prime 3 is a really good game, but how could NP not have also given a 10 to Ocarina? It's one of the best, if not the best, Zelda games ever made.

Chaosblast77

Our magazine rated Ocarina of Time a 9.5. Keep in mind that, as much as reviewers try to judge games using the same criteria, every writer approaches the process slightly differently. Some are less inclined to give a game a 10 because they see the score as a sign of perfection, and no game is truly perfect. For them, it's about how close a game can come to perfection. Others, like myself, simply take a 10 to mean "our highest recommendation."

Either way, anything above a 9 is still a rare and fantastic rating, so don't get too caught up in comparing scores of vastly different games that are from different eras and that were reviewed by different people.

DEAR DIARY

Will we see more awesome Wii accessories like the Zapper in the future? I'm hoping with all of my might that Nintendo will find my diary and create a sword controller, which would allow you to insert the Wii remote into an add-on sword hilt. Or, a wheel for racing games, a frying pan for cooking, and who knows what else? There have to be plenty of ways to make playing the Wii that much more awesome. I would die if there were game-exclusive controllers, like a Metroid arm-gun that you strap on.

Billy C.

Dude, Nintendo's totally making your Wii wheel for the new Mario Kart—they must've found your diary! Now, not only do they have all of your cool accessory ideas, but they also know that you really do like that girl in gym class. I hope that you didn't write down your locker combination in there.

my heart! Can you guys confirm or deny this?

Danielle H.

Danielle, this series is loved by millions of fans and makes Nintendo ridiculous amounts of money. Never fear: we will continue to see new Pokémon games until the Pokégeddon.

SAY ANYTHING

It would be really neat if, in future Zelda games, all characters (except for Link) would actually talk. The message box that writes what they say can still be there, but I find that watching the characters move their mouths while trying to read the text is a little difficult.

Drew E.

While I agree that Link doesn't need to talk, a vocal supporting cast is long overdue. Wait a minute—you watch their mouths move while reading the text? Are you trying to go cross-eyed?

TIME PARADOX

How do I keep getting my magazines so early? I received the December issue on October 30th! Furthermore, many of the games that were reviewed in that issue—such as Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn, Geometry Wars: Galaxies, Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker, and Contra 4—hadn't even been released yet when I got the magazine. So, how do you do it? Do you guys import games from Japan, get exclusive early copies, review games based on demos and trailers, or do you use a time machine?

Eric E.

*Well, we used to use a time machine until someone (*cough* Chris Shepperd *cough*) broke it. It's okay, though, because publishers will generally send us final versions of their games before copies are available in stores. And since an issue of Nintendo Power is at newsstands for a full month, we try to include reviews for games that will not only come out near the beginning of an issue's shelf life, but near the end of it, also.*

WE KNOW SNAKE

In Volume 222, you mentioned that Solid Snake is the first non-Nintendo character to be featured in the Super Smash Bros. series, but that is the most incorrect thing that I've heard in a while. Maybe you don't remember this, but Snake actually premiered on the NES in June 1988 in the first Metal Gear, as well as the sequel, Snake's Revenge, in April 1990.

Zia M.

Well played, Zia. BUT—what we meant is that Snake is the first character to appear in Smash that has not been in a game that was published or developed by Nintendo. He isn't Nintendo's character, even though he has appeared on Nintendo systems. While we're on the subject, I feel the need to promote this little-known gem:

GAME BOY COLOR
KONAMI
METAL GEAR SOLID
EVERYONE E
ONLY FOR GAME BOY COLOR

MOUTH-FOAMING MAD

I was upset that, in Volume 221, you referred to Tails as a "mutant squirrel." First off, Tails isn't a squirrel, he's a fox. And second, you shouldn't call him any names. I'm an avid Sonic fan and Tails is by far my favorite character. Although he can get himself into trouble sometimes, he's proven again and again that he can be just as cool and powerful as Sonic.

Hypo Prower

Hey, we meant no disrespect! See, in the original Japanese version, Tails was a mutant squirrel who overcame rabies and a heavy gambling problem to fight evil using his trademark Mouth Foam o' Death. With so many characters reverting back to their original Japanese versions lately, you can understand our confusion.

ZOMBIES BE WARNED

In Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, after seeing Billy shove off a zombie attack and follow up with an awesome double leg kick to the zombie's chest, I was inspired to try this myself. However, with the lack of a real zombie to try this on, I have to practice on things like the refrigerator and the walls of my house. I've gotten pretty good. Has anyone at Nintendo Power tried something like this after playing Chronicles?

Elisha B.

Elisha, you're on my team when the Zombie apocalypse hits. I can take down three whole refrigerators in under a minute, so together I think we'll be pretty badass.

PITCHING THE 'HOG

I have been a Sonic fan since I was born, and when I was little, my dad came up with the coolest slogan for the hedgehog. He changed the Adidas catchphrase "All Day I Dream about Sports" to "All Day I Dream about Sonic." What do you guys think?

Nathaniel B.

I'd put it somewhere after "Yo Quiero Sonic" and "Got Sonic?" but before "This is Your Brain on Sonic" and "Sonic—Finger Lickin' Good."

GOTTA HAVE MY GUIDES

Have you guys stopped making strategy guides? I haven't seen any lately.

Nick

Nintendo Power's Official Player's Guide series is presently on hold, but never fear—Prima is currently publishing guides as Nintendo's official partner.

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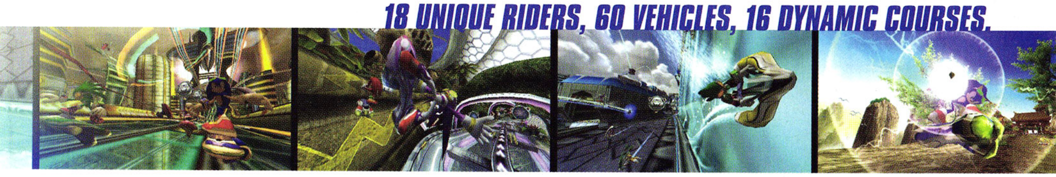

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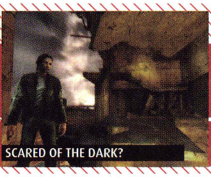

SCARED OF THE DARK?

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Wii GOT AN EMERGENCY

BRAAAAAAAAINS

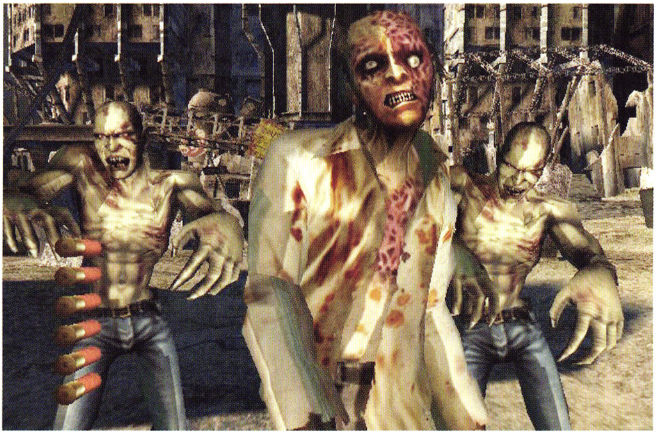
Return of the Dead

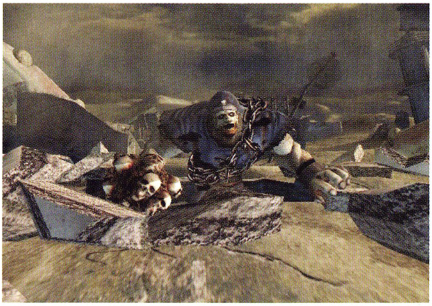
Sega resurrects another classic arcade shooter with The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return for Wii.

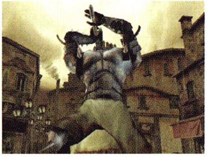
Hot on the heels of Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Wii owners will have another opportunity to pump zombies full of lead when Sega revisits the horrific haunts of its House of the Dead franchise this spring. As you could probably guess from the awkward title, The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return combines the second and third installments of the acclaimed light-gun series on a single Wii disc. True to their arcade heritage, these rail-based shooters forgo any hint of depth in favor of fast-paced gunplay, over-the-top gore, and some of the most delightfully atrocious voice acting ever recorded (it puts even Barry Burton to shame). Branching storylines provide extra replay value, and because mowing down shambling hordes of the undead is always best enjoyed with a friend, both games feature a two-player co-op mode. Sega also promises bonus content, though the publisher has yet to comment on specifics. (Perhaps the original House of the Dead is hidden in there somewhere; or better yet, The Typing of the Dead.)

Of course, neither game packs the visual wallop it once did, but light-gun shooters are always a natural fit for Wii, and these are two of the genre's all-time greats. Like Sega's other recent arcade port, Ghost Squad, the suggested retail price for The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return will be $30. Now we just need the company to announce a Virtua Cop anthology.

—**Steve T.**





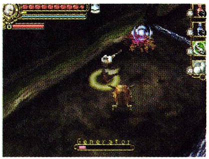


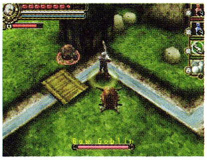
Both games have their share of imposing bosses. It probably goes without saying, but when the zombie apocalypse comes, beware of 'roided up police officers wrapped in chains and wielding clubs made of skulls.

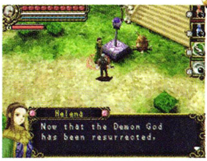
LEVEL-10 SPELUNKER

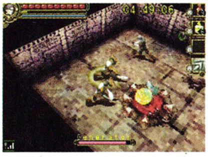
Back to the Depths

Hudson's classic action-RPG Dungeon Explorer re-emerges on DS with multiplayer action and customizable fighting styles.

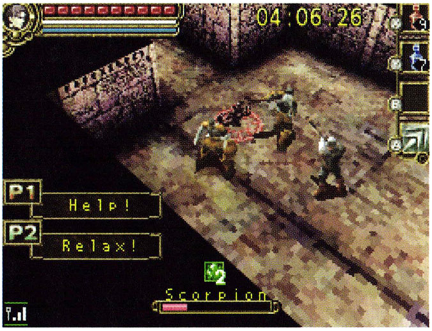


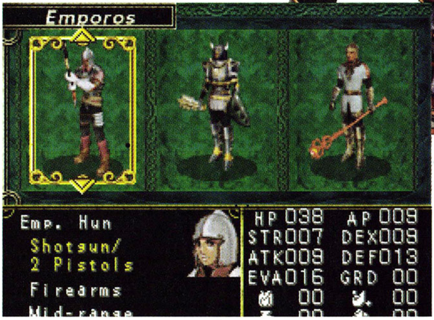



Helena
Now that the Demon God has been resurrected.



Dungeon Explorer isn't just for Virtual Console anymore. In early 2008, Hudson will revive the classic series on DS with Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts. Building upon the foundation of its TurboGrafx and Sega CD forebears, the new Dungeon Explorer lets you choose your hero's race and class, then engage in exploration and monster-slaying alone or with up to two additional players. While the top-down action of the original Dungeon Explorer resembled the arcade hit Gauntlet, Warriors of Ancient Arts has been brought up to modern spec with a 3-D Diablo-like sensibility. The enhancements extend beyond the visuals, too—you can acquire more than 100 different types of weapons, armor, and equipment, plus you can learn 60 different lost fighting arts from eight schools (thus the game's title). The combat skills will come in handy as you battle a wide range of enemies—including ancient robots, undead legions, and mutant beasts—in your quest to eradicate a destructive Demon God. The fate of the kingdom of Westoria will literally be in your hands. —**Chris H.**





Personalize your hero by selecting from three races and three character classes. You can further customize your warrior by distributing attribute points and learning a wide array of Ancient Fighting Arts.

SLIME TIME

Who You Gonna Call?

Nearly 20 years later, the Ghostbusters are back—in both Wii and DS form!

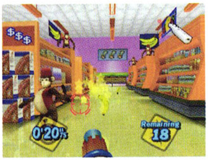
There's something strange in the neighborhood—and we're not talking about ghosts. We're talking about Ghostbusters, Sierra's recently announced licensed games for the Wii and DS. What's so strange about Ghostbusters, you ask? The fact that it doesn't seem to be just another quick cash-in title. Take the script, for example, written by *Ghostbusters* and *Ghostbusters II* writers/actors Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis, which has the Ghostbusters investigating the paranormal in an early '90s New York City. Speaking of which, look at the acting talent: both Aykroyd and Ramis (Dr. Ray Stantz and Dr. Egon Spengler, respectively), as well as Bill Murray (Dr. Peter Venkman), Ernie Hudson (Winston Zeddmore), Annie Potts (receptionist Janine Melnitz), and even William Atherton (EPA agent Walter Peck). Development for both the Wii and DS versions is being handled by Mushroom Men developers Red Fly Studios. Expect to learn more about this promising title as it nears its fall 2008 release date. —**Justin C.**

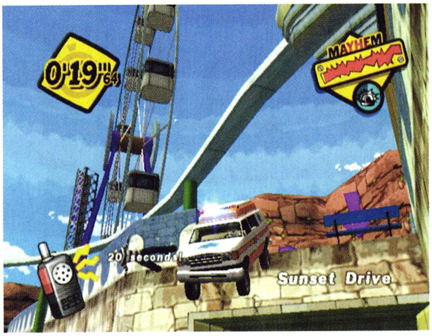
RESCUE Wii

Be a Hero

Emergency Mayhem finds new life as Codemasters rescues it from cancellation.

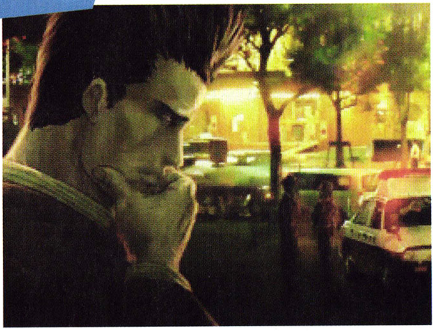
A while back, we mentioned a game called Emergency Mayhem, a Crazy Taxi-style game that had you rushing around Crisis City's eight different zones in an ambulance, a fire truck, or a police car, trying to aid as many citizens as possible. Unfortunately, the game never got to see the light of day. Until now, that is. Codemasters is planning Emergency Crisis for a spring 2008 release on Wii, enhancing the frantic action with Wii-specific controls. Once you arrive on the emergency scene, you can point the Wii remote to direct a fire hose or pump the remote to do CPR. That's just scratching the surface, though—there are more than 60 minigames in all. Your friends can get in on the action, too, as the game features four-player action to determine which of you is the most heroic. —Justin C.





Trying to help people in need is definitely a noble goal, but don't you think racing around the city might cause *more* problems?

TRICKY DICK



The Hunt Is On

Aksys Games brings an interactive mystery adventure to DS with Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles.

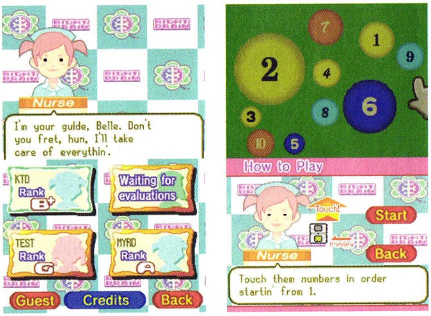
Point-and-click graphic-text adventures have found new life on the Nintendo DS, and Aksys Games is primed to add to that renaissance with Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles. Dubbed an "interactive digital novel," the game puts your sleuthing skills to the test in three cases. The stylus is the ultimate detective tool—you'll use it to investigate crime scenes, interview witnesses, discover clues, and more. An intricate story is at the heart of the game; over the course of the tale, you'll solve a murder in Central Park, find out the truth about a missing woman, and get to the bottom of a betrayal-filled conspiracy at the racetrack. Although Jake Hunter's spring release will mark the character's North American debut, his game is the latest in a popular Japanese series known as Tantei Jinguuji Saburo, which originated on the Famicom Disk System. —Chris H.

BRAAAAAAAAINS

Going Mental

When training your brain in minutes a day just isn't enough, Brain Assist offers more ways to pump up the old grey matter.

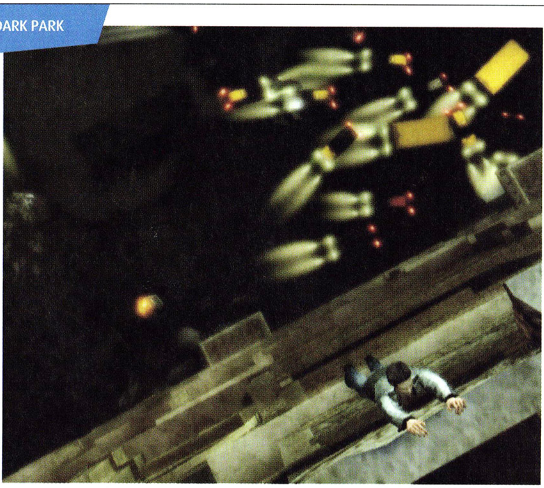
For years, parents around the globe insisted that video games were rotting their children's brains. Now there are several titles aimed specifically at doing just the opposite. The latest publisher dedicated to improving the mental acuity of the gaming audience is Sega, who recently announced Brain Assist for DS. Based on the popular Japanese arcade game Touch de Uno!, this spring release works out the right hemisphere of the brain via 10 minigames that challenge your memory, concentration, reflexes, deduction, and analytical abilities. The presentation is decidedly more playful than that of Brain Age, and players can choose from one of four nurses to act as their guide (which should prove at least slightly less creepy than the disembodied head of some Professor). It also offers a two-player co-op mode, as well as competitive exercises for up to four players. —Steve T.


Nurse

I'm your guide, Belle. Don't you fret, hun, I'll take care of everythin'.

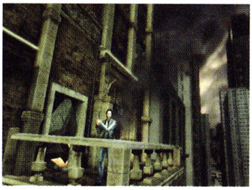
Touch them numbers in order startin' from 1.

Even if you prove to be phenomenally stupid, Brain Assist's nonjudgmental nurses are always there to offer encouragement.

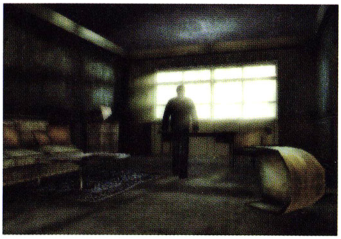


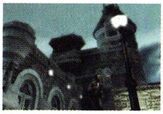
Alone Again (Naturally)

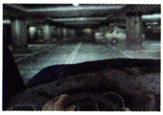
Forget the lousy movie adaptation. Alone in the Dark is back in game form, and it's more fright-inducing than ever.



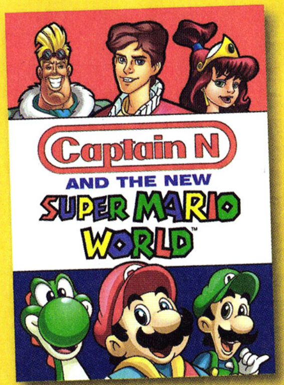
In 2005 *Alone in the Dark* proved to be an apt title for Uwe Boll's poorly attended screen version of the popular game series. In 2008 Atari will give the franchise a shot in the arm with an action-intensive comeback set over the course of one creepy night in New York City's Central Park. The story (starring series regular Edward Carnby) was inspired by contemporary TV dramas and scripted by veteran crime novelist and screenplay writer Lorenzo Carcaterra (*Law & Order*). The first published screens of the Wii title give us a taste for the art style, which uses depth of focus for a stunning effect, plus a glimpse of Central Park's Belvedere Castle as seen in the game. The title is set for release for all consoles (and the PC, where the series originated), but only the Wii version will allow for motion-controlled object manipulation. Actions like pulling candlesticks to reveal hidden passages are a big part of the adventure, and we're hopeful that mimicking real-world motion will make playing the game an even more immersive experience than it has been for past Alone in the Dark titles. —**George S.**







Above left: Lighting plays a huge role in in the game. Bottom right: You'll use the Wii remote to mimic interactions with all sorts of objects, including getting behind the wheel of a car.



2 DVD SET

THE FINAL ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN N AND THE SUPER MARIO BROS. ON 2 DVDS!

When you're playing at the level of Captain N and the Super Mario Bros., sooner or later the game's gotta end. Thankfully, that finale was everything we hoped it would be—the Saturday morning fave *Captain N And The New Super Mario World,* which saw both animated powerhouses live out their final adventures. For the first time, the entire series comes to DVD in a deluxe, 2-disc set, packed with bonus features like original concept art and more.

Also available:
The Super Mario Bros. Super Show! (4-DVD set), *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show! Volume 2* (4-DVD set), *The Adventures Of Super Mario Bros. 3: The Complete Series* (3-DVD set), and *Capain N: The Game Master* (4-DVD set)

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

A ton of November releases fell off the list this month, but the Wii and DS loaded right back up with plenty of new game announcements—just look at all that red!

Wii

Alone in the Dark	Atari	TBA
Alvin and the Chipmunks	Brash	12/07
Balloon Pop	Tommo	1/08
Blast Works: Build, Fuse & Destroy	Majesco	1/08
Blitz: The League	Midway	1/08
Blox	Electronic Arts	3/08
Bomberman Land	Hudson	1/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	1/08
Bully: Scholarship Edition	Rockstar Games	2/08
Cabela's Monster Bass	Activision	1/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Cocoto Magic Circus	Conspiracy Entertainment	12/07
Cranium Kabookii	Ubisoft	12/07
CSI: Hard Evidence	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	THQ	3/08
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	3/08
Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi 3	Atari	12/07
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	2/08
Dream Pinball	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Emergency Mayhem	Codemasters	4/08
Endless Ocean	Nintendo	1/08
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Furu Furu Park	Majesco	1/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra Entertainment	TBA
Godzilla Unleashed	Atari	12/07
The Golden Compass	Sega	12/08
Harvest Moon Heroes	Natsume	1/08
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	Capcom	1/08
The House of the Dead 2&3: Return	Sega	Spr 08
Indianapolis 500 Legends	Destineer	12/07
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
Jenga	Atari	12/07
Jumper	Brash Entertainment	2/08
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	Destineer	12/07
Kidz Sports: Basketball	Destineer	12/07
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	Destineer	1/08
Kidz Sports: International Soccer	Destineer	1/08
Kitty Luv	Activision	1/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Line Rider	InXille	Spr 08
London Taxi: Rush Hour	Activision	1/08
Luxor: Pharaoh's Challenge	Mumbo Jumbo	12/07
Mario Kart Wii*	Nintendo	Spr 08
Monkey King: The Legend Begins	Tommo	1/08
Monster Lab	Eidos	Sum 08
Monster Truck Offroad	Destineer	12/07
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	Fall 08
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	1/08
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
Myth Makers: Super Kart GP	Conspiracy	12/07
Nights: Journey of Dreams	Sega	12/07
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Nitrobike	Ubisoft	1/08
No More Heroes	Ubisoft	2/08
Obscure: The Aftermath	Ignition	Spr 08
Octopuzzle	Atlus/ Conspiracy	TBA
Okami	Capcom	Spr 08
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	Namco Bandai	3/08
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	3/08
Project H.A.M.M.E.R.	Nintendo	TBA
Rebel Raiders: Operation Nighthawk	Jack of All Games	2/08
Runaway	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	1/08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	Spr 08
Samurai Warriors: Katana	Koei	1/08
Sea Monsters: A Prehistoric Adventure	Destination Software	12/07
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	2/08
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	Sega	Q1 08
Space Station Tycoon	Namco Bandai	2/08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	Spr 08
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	2/08
Super Swing Golf: Season 2	Tecmo	12/07
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	TBA
Top Spin Tennis	2K Sports	Spr 08
We Love Golf	Capcom	TBA
Wii Fit	Nintendo	TBA
Worms: A Space Oddity	THQ	3/08
Yamaha Supercross	Destination Software	2/08

NINTENDO DS

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	Capcom	2/08
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	Nintendo	1/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	TBA
Alvin and the Chipmunks	Brash Entertainment	12/07
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	THQ	12/07
Assassin's Creed	Ubisoft	2/08
Barnyard Blast	Destination Software	1/08
Best of Tests DS	Conspiracy Entertainment	2/08
Bomberman Land Touch! 2	Hudson	1/08
Brain Assist	Sega	2/08
Bratz: Super Babyz	THQ	2/08
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	3/08
Bubble Bobble Double Shot	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Clue/Mouse Trap/ Perfection / Aggravation	Destination Software	12/07
Corvette Evolution GT	Valcon	12/07
CSI: Miami Nights	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
Diary Girl	Konami	2/08
Disciples II	Strategy First	3/08
Disney Friends	Disney Interactive	3/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Draglade	Atlus	12/07
Dream Pinball	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	Hudson Soft.	2/08
Eco Creatures: Save the Forest	Majesco	TBA
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	3/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	TBA
Garfield Gets Real	Destination Software	2/08
The Golden Compass	Sega	12/07
GoPets: Vactaion Island	Konami	1/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	1/08
Homie Rollerz	Destineer	1/08
Imagine: Figure Skater	Ubisoft	2/08
Indianapolis 500 Legends	Destineer	12/07
Insecticide	Gamecock Media Group	1/08
It's a Wonderful World	Square Enix	TBA
Jackass: The Game	Red Mile	1/08
Left Brain, Right Brain	Majesco	12/07
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Line Rider	InXile	Spr 08
Luxor 2	Mumbo Jumbo	12/07
M&M's Kart Racing	Destination Software	1/08
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	Sega	1/08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	TBA
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	12/07
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
My Life Coach	Ubisoft	3/08
Mysterious Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	Chunsoft	2/08
N+	Atari	3/08
Nanostray 2	Majesco	3/08
New Zealand Story Revolution	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	Tecmo	2/08
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Nintendo Crossword*	Nintendo	TBA
Pet Shop	Ubisoft	3/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	3/08
Professor Branium's Games	Destineer	3/08
Professor Layton and the Curious Village	Nintendo	2/08
River King Mystic Valley	Natsume	TBA
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	4/08
Sonic RPG*	Sega	TBA
Spectrobes II	Disney Interactive	Fall 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	Spr 08
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	Spr 08
Suzuki Super-Bikes II: Riding Challenge	Jack of All Games	2/08
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	Ignition	Spr 08
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	1/08
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	1/08
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Warhammer 40K: Squad Command	THQ	12/07
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wild Petz: Tigerz	Ubisoft	2/08
WordJong	Destineer	12/07
Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	Konami	12/07
Zoo Tycoon 2	THQ	2/08

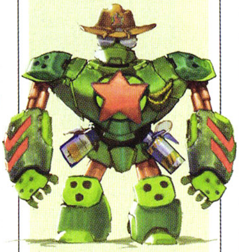
NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE *TENTATIVE TITLE

BITS OF TID

Handle with Care

The makers of Baten Kaitos break into Wii development.

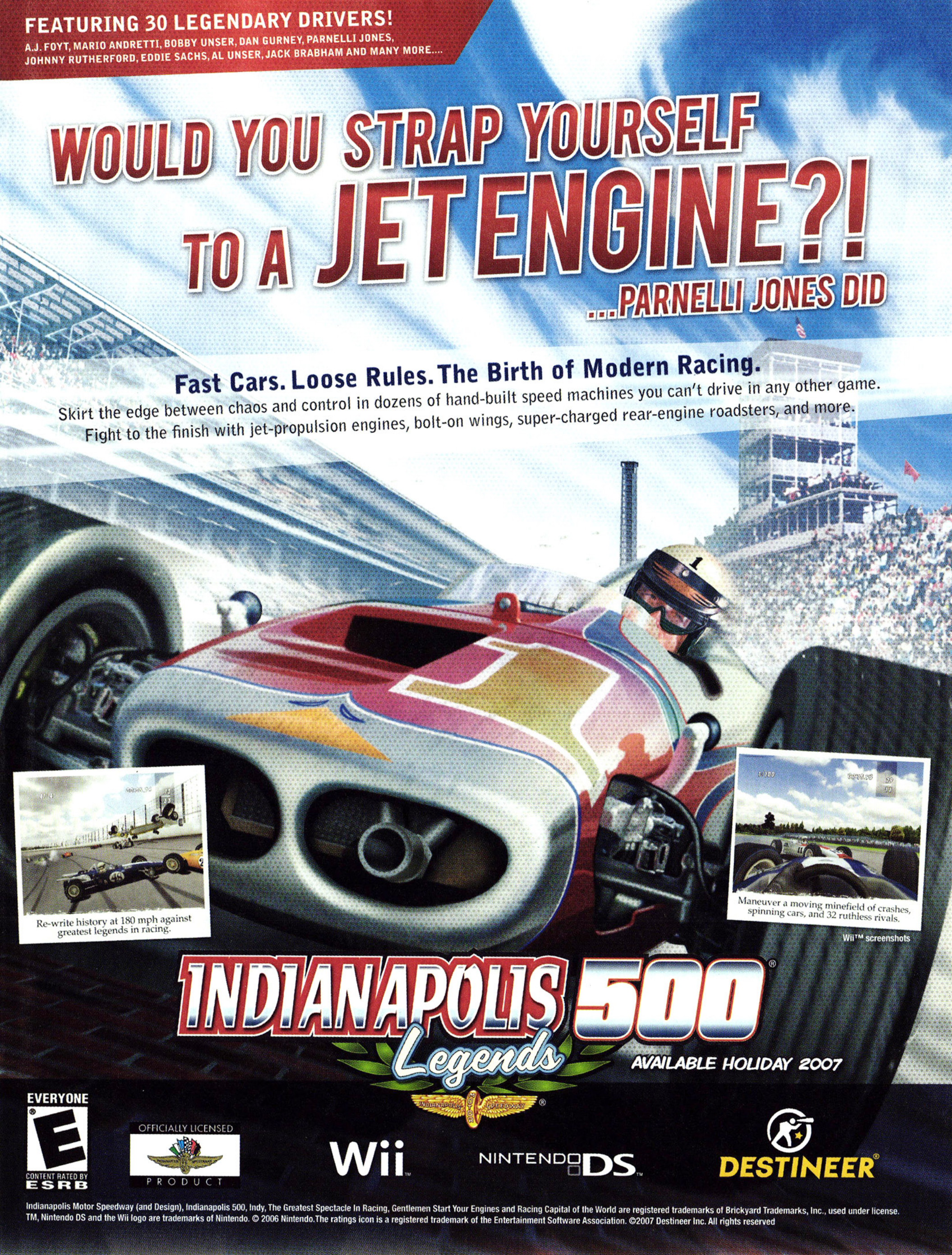
Just as we were going to press, Namco Bandai announced a new Wii RPG in Japan called Fragile. The game is in development at Tri-Crescendo (the studio behind the Baten Kaitos series, as well as Eternal Sonata for Xbox 360) and takes place in a post-apocalyptic world. Details are scarce, but you can check out the teaser trailer at fragile.namco-ch.net. No word yet on a North American release.



From Russia with Humor

Lighthearted robots come to DS in RTS.

Russia-based developer Vogster is teaming up with the writers of *SpongeBob SquarePants* to deliver a comical yet deep real-time strategy game set in a world of battling robots. Look for the as-yet-untitled DS game this spring.



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Wii Channels

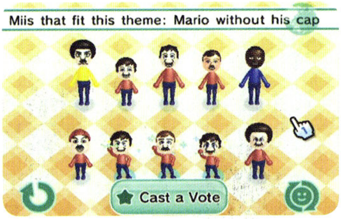
Gifts, Games, and More

Two new channels arrive, along with another fine batch of retro releases—including one of the most popular games of all time.

FROM Mii TO YOU

Creating Miis and giving gifts might not exactly be similar activities, but they have one big thing in common: they're the subjects of the latest channels available for Wii. The Check Mii Out Channel allows you to submit Miis based on themes set by Nintendo (such as Mario or the tooth fairy), as well as vote for which ones are your favorites. You can also upload and download Miis in the Posting Plaza.

The Gift Giving Channel, meanwhile, lets you buy Virtual Console games and send them as gifts to other Wii users. The channel—scheduled to go live on December 3—also lets you send a message along with your gift. Both new channels are downloadable for free from the Wii Shop Channel's WiiWare menu.



Miis that fit this theme: Mario without his cap

The ten Miis you see when voting on the contest entries are randomly selected. You can vote for your three favorites.

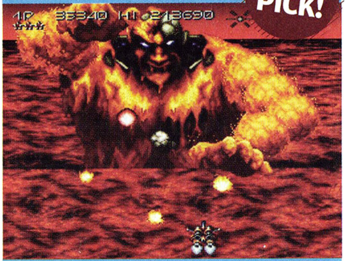
VIRTUAL CONSOLE

WHAT'S NEW IN RETRO GAMING!

12
VC Games

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICK!



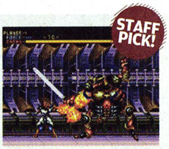
AXELAY

Chris H's Pick

Platform: **NES**
Publisher: **Konami**
Genre: **Shooter**
Original Release: **1992**

As far as I'm concerned, Axelay is the best shooter ever conceived. Its beauty is in its diversity; two viewpoints (side-scrolling and behind-the-ship faux 3-D) keep things exciting, and the ability to choose your arsenal and switch between weapons on the fly adds just the right amount of strategy. The game looks and sounds great, the difficulty is perfect, and the bosses are phenomenal. This is Konami at its finest.

STAFF PICK!

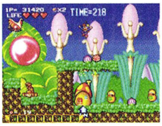


ALIEN SOLDIER

Platform: **Sega Genesis**
Publisher: **Sega**
Genre: **Action**
Original Release: **1995**

WHAT: This tough-as-nails run-'n'-gun from the hardcore masters at Treasure eschews traditional game structure in favor of bite-size levels and copious boss battles (more than 30 in total).

WHY: Like Sin and Punishment, Alien Soldier is making its US debut via Virtual Console. Though not of the same caliber, it's still a solid action romp. —**ST**

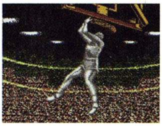


BLUE'S JOURNEY

Platform: **NeoGeo**
Publisher: **SNK/D4**
Genre: **Platformer**
Original Release: **1991**

WHAT: This side-scrolling platformer demonstrates the diversity of the early NeoGeo lineup. Your hero can grow and shrink on command, as well as pick up and hurl stunned enemies.

WHY: The detailed graphics make the game look much better than most platformers of its era. The difficulty isn't as stiff as past NeoGeo releases. —**CH**



DOUBLE DRIBBLE

Platform: **NES**
Publisher: **Konami**
Genre: **Sports**
Original Release: **1987**

WHAT: Five-on-five hoops from an era when full-screen dunks made you say "fresh!" and the only two buttons were "shoot" and "pass." Gotta love nonlicensed teams—go Boston Frogs!

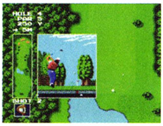
WHY: Don't expect a very satisfying basketball experience, but the constant mad scramble for the ball—and glitchy long-range bombs—make this a decent nostalgic trash-talker for two. —**CSL**

ECCO JR.

Platform: **Sega Genesis**
Publisher: **Sega**
Genre: **Action**
Original Release: **1995**

WHAT: Ecco the dolphin was providing calm undersea exploration well before Endless Ocean. The kid-friendly gameplay primarily involves using your sonar to find undersea objects and creatures.

WHY: If you've got youngsters who want to have a little fun without worrying about a lot of challenge, this is the game for them. —**CH**



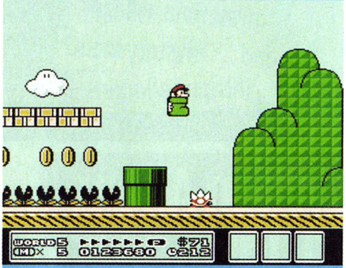
POWER GOLF

Platform: **TurboGrafx16**
Publisher: **Hudson**
Genre: **Sports**
Original Release: **1989**

WHAT: Sports games tend not to age very well, and Power Golf is a perfect example of that. It offers only one course, the controls are extremely touchy, and the game feels remarkably inaccessible. On the plus side, up to three players can share in the misery.

WHY: It replicates real golf by being incredibly frustrating. —**ST**

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT



SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

Chris Sl's Pick

Platform: **NES**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Genre: **Platformer**
Original Release: **1990**

STAFF PICK!

For many Mario maniacs, Super Mario Bros. 3 is the greatest game ever made. It introduced elements that became series regulars, such as power-up suits, map-screen navigation, and Bowser's kids, the Koopalings. Ah, the memories: taking flight in the Tanooki suit, frantically dodging cannonballs, humming along to infectiously catchy tunes—this game is all that is right and good in the universe.

SONIC 3-D BLAST

Platform: **Sega Genesis**
Publisher: **Sega**
Genre: **Platformer**
Original Release: **1996**

WHAT: Sonic's final Genesis outing (which also saw release on Sega Saturn with vastly improved graphics and music) is a peculiar isometric platformer that has the hedgehog collecting dim-witted birds called Flickies.

WHY: 3-D Blast lacks Sonic's trademark speed, but it's an interesting diversion for series completists. —**ST**

SUPER AIR ZONK

Platform: **TurboGrafx CD**
Publisher: **Hudson**
Genre: **Shooter**
Original Release: **1993**

WHAT: Blast your way through waves of cartoony enemies in the CD-powered sequel to Air Zonk. You can tackle the themed levels in any order.

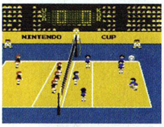
WHY: An awesome soundtrack and playful aesthetic help Super Air Zonk stand out in a crowded genre. How many shooters let you merge with a fish and attack enemies by using sushi? —**CH**

VEGAS STAKES

Platform: **Super NES**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Genre: **Gambling**
Original Release: **1993**

WHAT: Blackjack, slots, roulette, craps, and poker—five ways to either get rich or go broke. Hey, at least you can return to your last save if you bust!

WHY: It's the random interactions with other casinogoers and the consequences thereof—not the gambling, as good as it is—that really make Vegas Stakes stand out. —**JC**



VOLLEYBALL

Platform: **NES**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Genre: **Sports**
Original Release: **1987**

WHAT: Two decades ago, back in the day of generically titled sports games, there was Volleyball, a, er, volleyball game. 'Nuff said.

WHY: Only get this if you absolutely must have a volleyball game on Virtual Console. You're better off, however, waiting for something else. Volleyball is a frustrating, ugly game that is best left forgotten. —**JC**

WRECKING CREW

Platform: **NES**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Genre: **Action**
Original Release: **1985**

WHAT: We always knew that Mario had destructive tendencies. In Wrecking Crew, he drags Luigi down into his world of delinquency, destroying structures in a 100-stage two-player action game with puzzle leanings.

WHY: Other than the Mario connection, the best reason to play this fairly obscure release is its custom level editor. —**CH**

Mysterious dungeons, mysterious villages, and . . . mystery meat? Intrigue abounds!

Archaic Sealed Heat Pg. 36
Bomberman Land Pg. 34
Bubble Bobble: Double Shot Pg. 34
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed Pg. 26
Endless Ocean Pg. 35
Harvest Moon DS Cute Pg. 32
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games Pg. 29
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N+ Pg. 36
Nanostray 2 Pg. 29
Professor Layton and the Curious Village Pg. 27
Super Smash Bros. Brawl Pg. 28
Zoo Tycoon 2 Pg. 32

When Aliens Attack

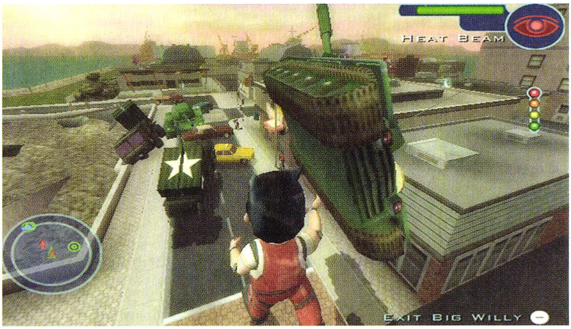
>DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Locomotive Games • RELEASE: March 2008

Evidently not satisfied with terrorizing the populace of Earth in the first two Destroy All Humans! games, Crypto the Furon is back to wreak even more tongue-in-cheek havoc in Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed. Set in the disco-tastic 1970s, the series' first Wii entry centers on the Furons' most fiendish plan yet: fast food. The Big Willy hot dog chain isn't just unhealthy—its meat comes from all the humans that Crypto eliminated in his previous exploits. Gross and disturbing, sure—but in Destroy All Humans!, you play the bad guy, so anything goes.

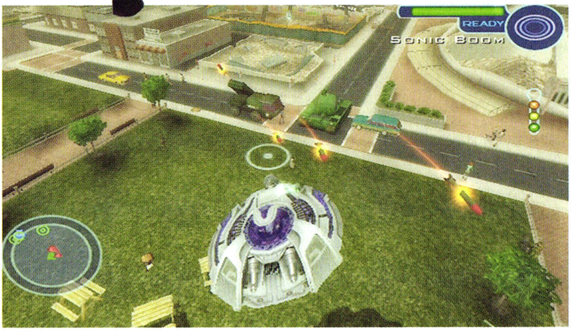
While the technologically stunted human race is still playing Pong and listening to eight-tracks, Crypto has access to all manner of weapons and equipment to make sure that no one exposes the Furons' scheme. A jet pack, a disintegrator ray, and the electricity-spewing Zap-O-Matic are just the beginning; you'll also acquire Ion Detonators (timed explosive charges), the Zombie Gun (which causes the humans to turn against and infect each other), and, naturally, an anal probe. Thanks to the Wii remote, aiming is as simple as pointing at the screen and pressing the B Button to fire—making it all the easier to pluck the humans' brains. When firepower alone won't do the trick, Crypto can use a variety of mental powers, including hypnosis, body-snatching, and telekinesis. Crypto's weapons and powers are upgradeable, too; the more humans he eliminates, the stronger he gets.

Large, open environments (ranging from the American heartland to the jungles of southeast Asia) and mission-based gameplay provide ample opportunity for Crypto to show off his skills. There's plenty of variety—some missions have you protecting trucks of tainted meat, while others require you to disguise yourself as a human to infiltrate secret meetings, and others rely on all-out destruction. And you're not limited to just running around on foot; at almost any time you can jump into your UFO (which comes equipped with an abduction beam and Death Ray) or into the Big Willy mech—the restaurant chain's nearly invincible mascot. Equipped with eye lasers, lethal belches, and a strong throwing arm, the Big Willy mech is your ultimate weapon; it can level cities and pop the brains out of humans so you can eat 'em like candy. You can even share the carnage with a fellow human-hater in co-op mode. Invading Earth is a messy job, but some alien's got to do it. —Chris H.



The Big Willy mech is strong and heavily armed, plus it provides a nearly endless supply of double entendres.

06
ANAL PROBE



Brain Buster

>PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE

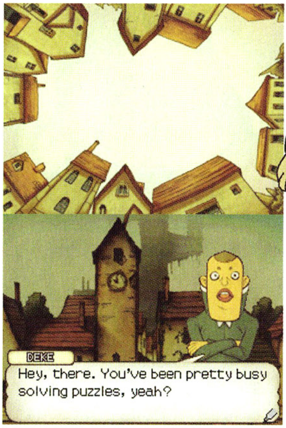
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

It continues to amaze how the diminutive DS has opened the floodgates to the development community's creativity. There are so many cool ideas coming to fruition on the platform that we may have otherwise never seen. Case in point: Professor Layton and the Curious Village. This wonderfully imaginative adventure from Level-5 (the folks behind Dark Cloud and Dragon Quest VIII) combines a Sherlock Holmes-inspired graphic adventure with mind-bending puzzles designed by Chiba University professor Akira Tago (whose *Head Gymnastics* series of puzzle books has sold more than 12 million copies in Japan).

As the game's titular archeologist, you're tasked with solving assorted mysteries in the sleepy (and, of course, curious) burg of St. Mystere. But gathering information isn't as simple as chatting up the locals. The town's peculiar denizens are obsessed with puzzles, and their cooperation is often contingent on your solving one of their riddles. Though the brain-teasers vary in difficulty, the majority will challenge even the most studied player. And there's a great sense of satisfaction that comes with figuring out a particularly mind-boggling stumper. Often you just need to step back and look at the problem from a different angle; many of the more than 120 puzzles are ingenious (and deceptive) in their simplicity.

While the puzzles are definitely the main attraction, Professor Layton also endeavors to weave a good mystery. Frequent plot twists will keep you guessing, and as we've come to expect from Nintendo's localization team, the writing is excellent. Though it was developed in Japan, the game's aesthetic feels very European. All of the characters are drawn with an earthy color palette, and there's a certain warmth to the illustrations that really makes the game stand out. Art direction has always been one of Level-5's strengths, and it's great to see them continuing to spread their wings.

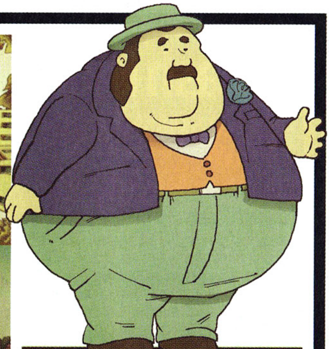
The DS is home to quite a few titles that test your mental acumen, but taken as a game experience, Professor Layton is definitely more engaging than most. As such, it seems one of the truest examples of an "expanded audience" title—something that will genuinely appeal to the enthusiast crowd as much as it does the casual market. And that's something we can all get behind. —STEVE T.

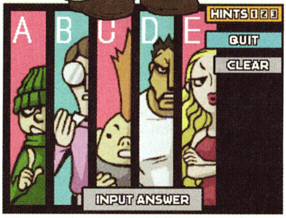


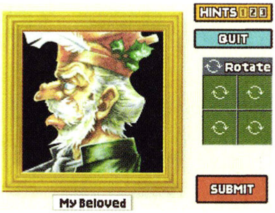
DEKE

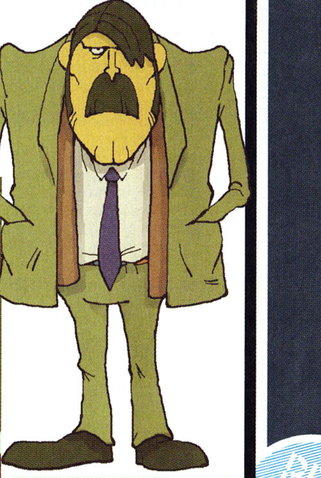
Hey, there. You've been pretty busy solving puzzles, yeah?

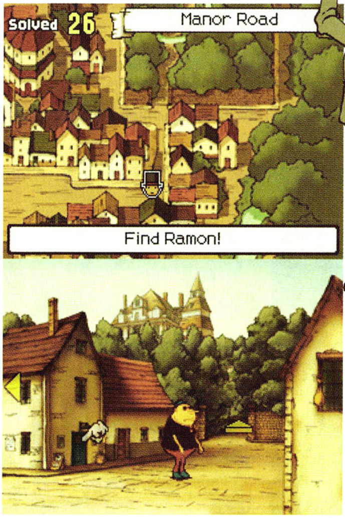
St. Mystere's citizens may be very skilled at crafting puzzles, but not all of the townsfolk are what you would call easy on the eyes.

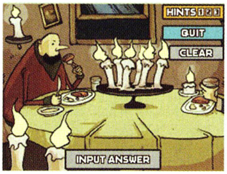












This may be the least-romantic candlelight dinner ever.

Smash Hits

>SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008

As the February 10th launch of Super Smash Bros. Brawl approaches, the game's mastermind, Masahiro Sakurai, continues to dole out details every weekday at the Smash Bros. Dojo (www.smashbros.com). Customization has been at the forefront in recent weeks. Though it should come as no surprise that you will be able to reassign buttons for all four controller configurations, Sakurai has revealed that you'll be able to save your changes to a player name so the game loads your control preferences whenever you play under that name. You'll even be able to transfer the name to your remote so your customized controls go wherever your smashing takes you. And if you're wondering where the motion-based controls are, fret not—the optional Shake Smash maneuver allows you to trigger Smash Attacks with a shake of the Wii remote.

An additional way to customize gameplay came to light with the Stage Builder feature. With it, you'll be able to create your own stages from scratch by placing building-block pieces that represent platforms and traps. Not only will you be able to share your creations with friends (via an SD card or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection), but you'll be able to give them to the rest of the Smash Bros. community, too. Stages that have been submitted to Nintendo will be distributed one at a time to players on a regular basis. They'll also disappear regularly, so you'll want to smash daily to see what your fellow brawlers have devised.

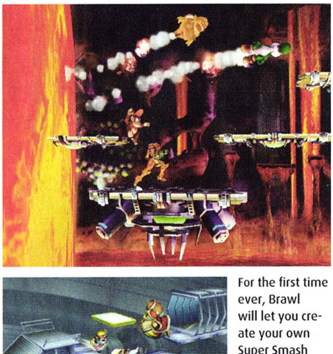
Recent news on preset stages has ranged from silly to sublime. The Pictochat stage is an unusual one; it starts as a blank screen then introduces platforms and obstacles that resemble Pictochat doodles. The lava-drenched Norfair stage is more of a classic Smash Bros. stage, giving us a re-creation of Ridley's lair from the Metroid titles. All of that fire is complemented by a load of ice in the Summit stage, home to the pair from Ice Climbers, Popo and Nana. If it's big you want, look no further than the New Pork City stage, which takes its inspiration from the Mother/Earthbound series.

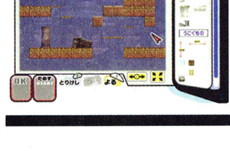
King Dedede (of Kirby-game fame) has joined the fold as a playable character, and a pair of very able fighters from serious action titles has been introduced as Assist Trophies: cyborg ninja Gray Fox from the Metal Gear world and Saki Amamiya, who recently made his stateside debut in Sin and Punishment for the Virtual Console.

If you're new to the Smash Bros. world, you'll be happy to know that an extensive training mode has been introduced, as has a Spectator mode that allows you to watch other players have at it via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. The promise of so many new features should keep you warm with anticipation during the cold winter as you wait for the brawl to begin. —GEORGE S.

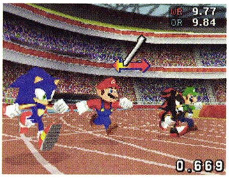
Metal Gear Solid's mysterious ninja—Grey Fox himself—has joined Solid Snake in Brawl! His quick blade makes him a formidable assist character.

[Above] The baseball bat is still one of the most powerful weapons. [Right] Watch out for moving walls of lava in the new Metroid stage. [Below] Pictochat?

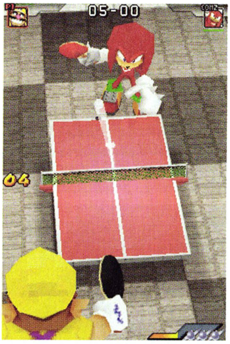


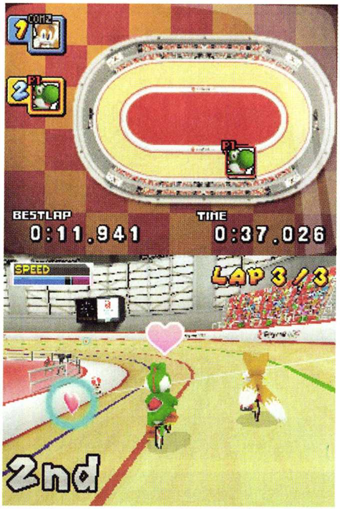


For the first time ever, Brawl will let you create your own Super Smash Bros. levels! You can even share them with friends using Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.



Hedgehogs versus plumbers...a classic rivalry is renewed, and now with touch-screen control.





Either Yoshi is finally revealing his true feelings for his longtime Sega rival, or he's collecting hearts to replenish his stamina in the DS-exclusive cycling event.

Let the Games Begin

>MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA • RELEASE: JANUARY 2008

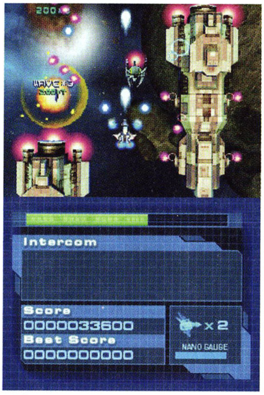
The Summer Olympics usually happen every four years, but Sega is treating us to another go at the games just three months after Mario and Sonic carried the torch to Wii. The DS take on Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games features 16 official Olympic events, such as the 100-meter dash, the high jump, archery, and table tennis. Two events—cycling and 10-meter platform diving—are exclusive to the handheld game. The DS version of Mario & Sonic utilizes the touch screen to let you run, pedal, and swim your way to victory. Teams Mario and Sonic each feature eight athletes from their respective series: from speed specialists Sonic, Shadow, and Yoshi to power players Knuckles and Bowser. You can enter a single event, complete a circuit, or join in Mission mode for a series of challenges. Up to four players compete via local wireless connections, and there are options for single-card and multicard play. Additionally, you can see how you rank on the world stage by logging onto the leader board via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. —GEORGE S.

Stray Shots

>NANOSTRAY 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: SHIN'EN • RELEASE: JANUARY 2008

Like its 2005 predecessor, Nanostray 2 proves that old-school shooters still have a place in an era of newfangled touch-driven hardware. The sequel is even more intense and varied than the first Nanostray; eschewing the 3/4-overhead perspective of the original, Nanostray 2 includes both top-down and side-view stages (depending on which of the eight levels you're playing) filled with wave after wave of enemies. Powerful, screen-filling bosses (including one that crawls along the walls while the room rotates) provide a great opportunity for you to test out your special weapons, such as a pulse laser, homing blasts, and magnetic mines. Freely positionable attack drones augment your arsenal even further. Equally exciting is the ability to play the game using either the Control Pad and buttons (for a traditional shooter experience) or the touch screen (which provides maximum responsiveness). In addition to a single-player story mode, the game features 32 challenge missions, unlockable bonus games, and two-player co-op and versus play, plus you can earn bragging rights by uploading your high scores over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.. —CHRIS H.



Score
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Best Score
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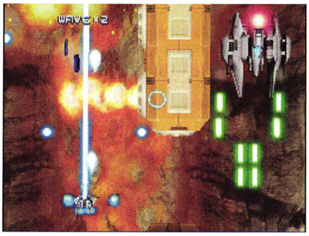
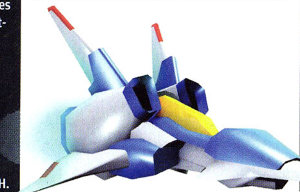


Special weapons such as the pulse laser will help you carve through the enemy armada. You can replenish your special weapon ammo by collecting blue tokens.



Random Wandering

>MYSTERY DUNGEON: SHIREN THE WANDERER

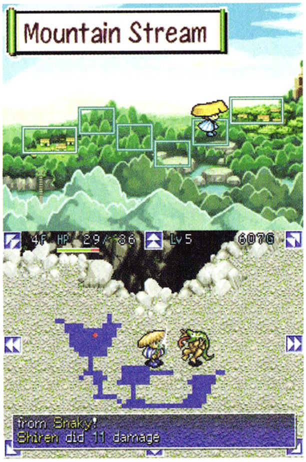
PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: CHUNSOFT • RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008

A remake of 1995 Japanese Super Famicom release Fushigi no Dungeon 2: Furai no Shiren, Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer is an old-fashioned dungeon crawler with RPG leanings. Shiren may be inexperienced, but he slices mightily through a series of monster-packed mazes in his search for the Golden Condor of El Dorado. If the hero-in-training perishes, it's game over. You start again from the first location with no money, no experience points, and none of your accumulated weapons; that is, unless you have a friend—a fellow Mystery Dungeon player—who can bail you out. Following Pokémon Mystery Dungeon's lead, the game lets one player rescue another during a local wireless session, via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, or through the use of a password system. A rescued warrior is free to continue where Shiren bit the dust, and to reward the rescuer with a gift.

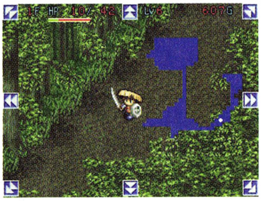
Dungeons are randomly generated, meaning that repeat plays will bring new sets of chambers and corridors for you to explore. The action is displayed with an overhead view. As you advance, a map of the area is revealed, showing everywhere that you have been, plus the locations of items, enemies, traps, and stairs. Characters move on a grid and battles are turn-based. If you stop when you see an enemy, the creature will also stop, allowing you to size up the situation before you act. Take a step, and the monster will move. Launch an attack when you are within range, and your target will react. The encounters will seem stilted at first for players who are used to free-form action, but the upside is that survival is easier for the twitch-play impaired. A tutorial that wasn't in the Super Famicom game acquaints you with movement and battle before the adventure begins. Also new to the remake are additional monsters, larger areas, and, of course, updated graphics and sound.

A talking weasel accompanies Shiren on the journey, and fellow wanderers offer assistance and advice, as well as items (such as food). The adventurer has to eat rice balls and the like to carry his heavy pack and, ultimately, to survive. In one of several side quests, you can open a restaurant to get an unlimited supply of food. Some consumables allow Shiren to transform into monsters temporarily. Other (non-food) items can be combined with weapons in a melding pot to create new objects.

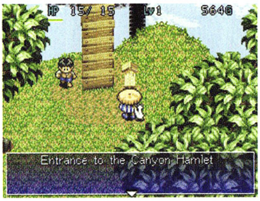
Developer Chunsoft created the first five Dragon Quest games, so you know they can craft a solid RPG. —GEORGE S.



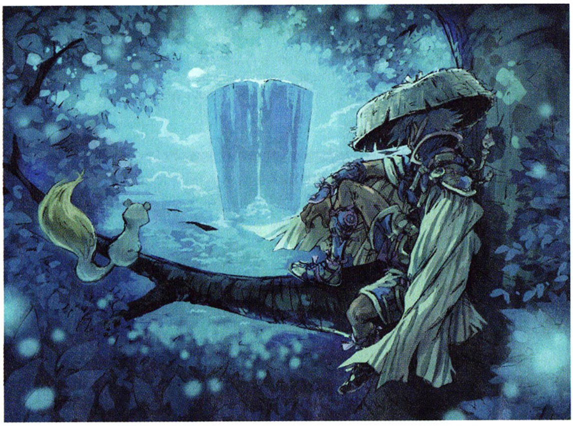
from Snaky!
Shiren did 11 damage

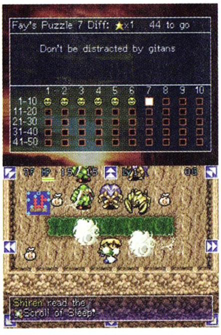


If you don't like the map overlaying the action, don't worry—you have the option to move it to the upper screen.



Entrance to the Canyon Hamlet



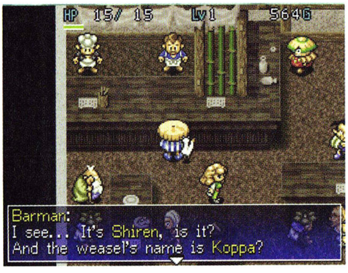


Fay's Puzzle 7 Diff: ★x1 44 to go

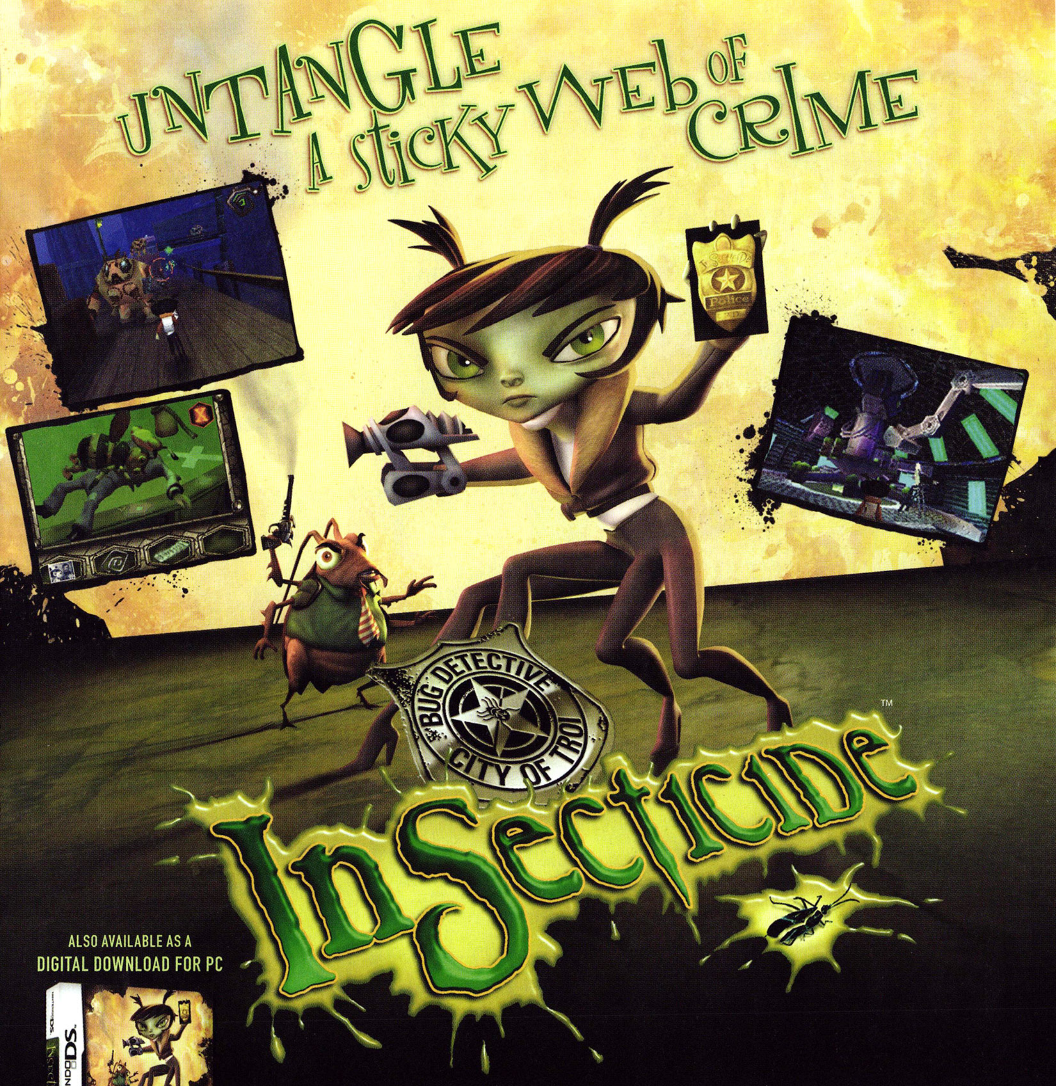
Don't be distracted by gitans

Shiren read the
Scroll of Sleep!

There's more to Shiren the Wanderer than navigating randomly generated dungeons. There are towns to explore, villagers to interact with, and optional challenges to undertake.



Barman:
I see... It's Shiren, is it?
And the weasel's name is Koppa?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Screens from Nintendo DS™ version

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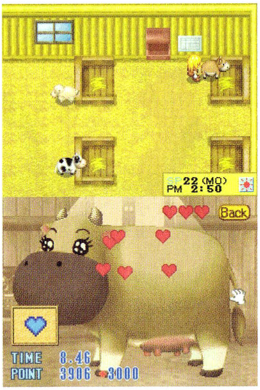
One for the Ladies

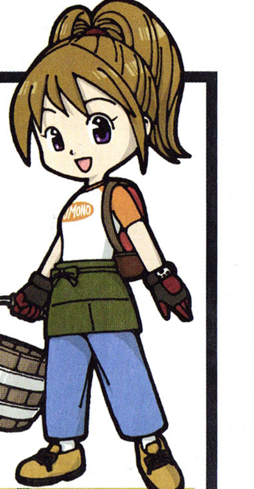
>HARVEST MOON DS CUTE

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NATSUME
DEVELOPER: NATSUME • RELEASE: Q1 2008

Natsume keeps plowing the Harvest Moon fields, this time with a remake of Harvest Moon DS. Harvest Moon DS Cute is essentially the same game as the original title—you're the new farmer in Forget-Me-Not Valley, and you must prove your worth by growing crops and rescuing the magical Harvest Sprites, who will in turn help you in your fields. This time around you play as a girl and, accordingly, all of the eligible suitors in town are men. In addition to offering new tasks and events, Cute gives you the chance to put on different outfits and decorate your house. For veterans of the Harvest Moon series, the main character should be familiar to you—she can be either the heroine from More Friends of Mineral Town or Another Wonderful Life. Don't expect Cute to take it easy on you 'cause you're a girl—like Harvest Moon DS, this is one of the more-challenging games in the franchise. Cute should crop up in stores in early 2008. —CHRIS SH.



You'd better give Bessie all the care she needs if you expect her to fill that pail with delicious calcium-rich milk.

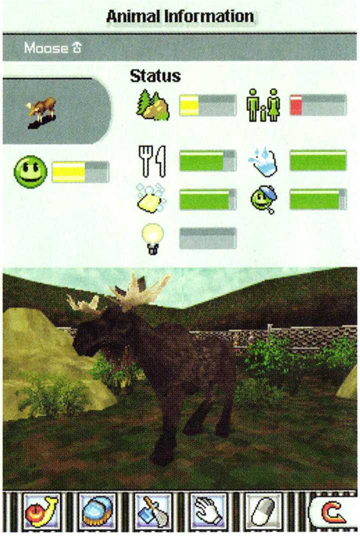


Animal Attraction

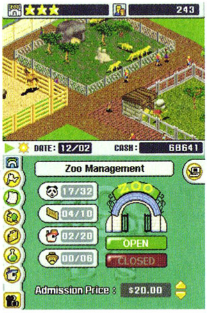
>ZOO TYCOON 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: ALTRON • RELEASE: SPRING 2008

Park simulation and virtual pet care collide in THQ's second DS installation of the Zoo Tycoon series. You play the role of zoo designer and director, placing species from around the world in habitats that approximate their natural environments. Most of the game is controlled by way of the touch screen. Your lion needs a savannah rock. Your chimpanzee needs a banana tree. Select the objects and place them where they belong with your stylus. Available items include fences and walls, foliage, concession stands, and specialty housing, such as a reptile building. Five campaigns will see you through the creation of the park and its growth from a one-zebra tourist trap to an established attraction. The new Zookeeper mode gives you one-on-one time with your charges, allowing you to observe them in a 3-D view and initiate upkeep through touch-controlled minigames. Also available is the Tycoon Showdown, which allows you to compete with other Zoo Tycoon 2 owners. —GEORGE S.



Uh-oh. The majesctic moose's happiness meter is on the wane. An unhappy moose means unhappy guests, so you'd better start cleaning those antlers, pronto!



Running a zoo ain't just about feeding zebras. There's plenty to manage behind the scenes—luckily, it's easily accessible via the DS's touch screen.

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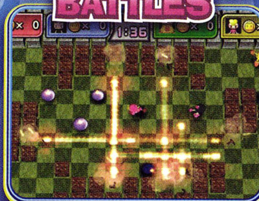

MINI GAMES GALORE

HIGHSCORE
0 26 00
SCORE
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Wii Screens shown

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Cartoon Violence
Comic Mischief

Wii NINTENDO DS PSP

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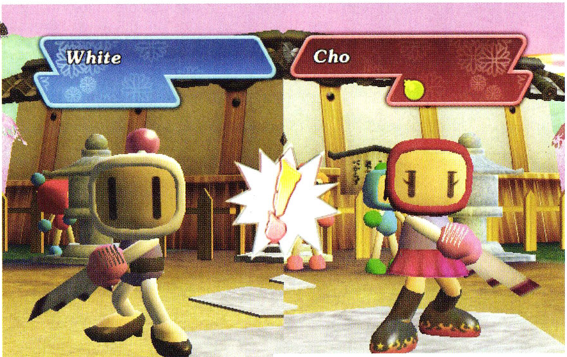
Bombs A-Wii

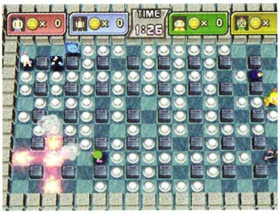
>BOMBERMAN LAND

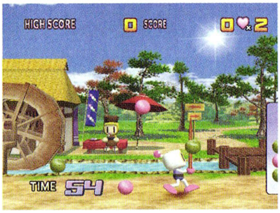
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **Hudson**
DEVELOPER: **Hudson** • RELEASE: **January 2008**

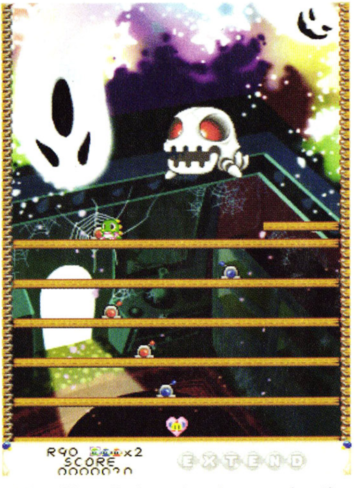
Following in the explosive footsteps of the DS Bomberman Land Touch! games, Bomberman Land for Wii is primarily a minigame collection set within an adventure framework. As you explore a theme park, you'll partake in 50 diversions—40 for solo play and 10 designed for multiple players—to climb the rankings and become the park's champion. The controls for the activities are as diverse as the minigames themselves: you'll point at the screen and shoot volcanic rocks in Volcano Blast, you'll hold the remote sideways and pump it up and down in Jet Handcar, and you'll swing the remote to disarm your opponent in Sword Draw. While some minigames are all about action, others are more cerebral (such as Math Class, in which you must complete simple equations). As is the norm for the series, Bomberman Land also includes the classic top-down competitive Bomberman game for up to four players. Plenty of modes are available, from the traditional to a Wii-exclusive mode in which you point at the screen to chuck bombs and collect power-ups. —Chris H.



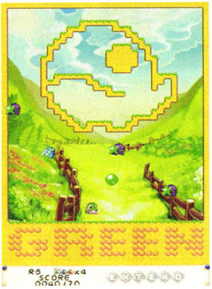
Not every minigame involves bombs. In Sword Draw, you clobber your cutesy foe with a blade.

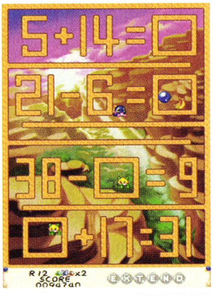






Bubble Bobble: Double Shot combines classic gameplay with modern enhancements like a dual-screen playfield, improved graphics, and spooky bosses.



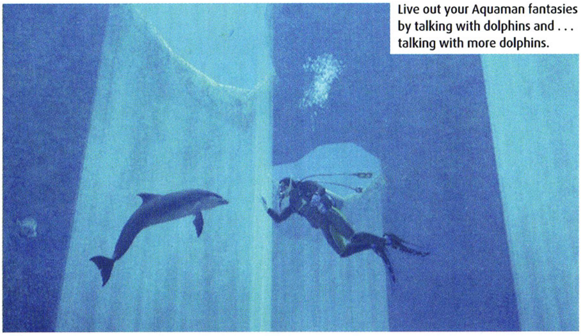


Pop Culture

>BUBBLE BOBBLE: DOUBLE SHOT

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **Ignition**
DEVELOPER: **Marvelous** • RELEASE: **February 2007**

For more than 20 years, Taito's dinosaur brothers Bob and Bub have been encasing enemies in bubbles just to watch them pop in the Bubble Bobble and Bust-a-Move titles. Their latest adventure harkens back to the original Bubble Bobble game with revamped graphics and 100 two-screen-tall levels (the Double Shot of the title) spread out over 10 lands. This time, cousin Bubu joins the pair for a three-pronged attack. You switch between blue, green, and red dinosaurs using the L and R Buttons to take on enemies, some of which are vulnerable only to color-coordinated shots. Once the baddies are in bubbles, you must pounce on them to finish the job. The levels are chockablock with items—some worth bonus points, others offering temporary powers—and floating spheres that the dinos can bounce from for a boost to a level's upper reaches. If you run out of dino lives, you can continue your game by succeeding in a touch-controlled minigame. In case Bubble Bobble: Double Shot doesn't satiate your desire for old-style Taito action, Ignition is also bringing an updated version of New Zealand Story to the DS in February. —George S.



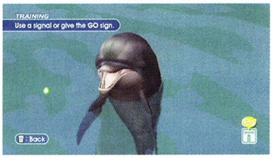
Live out your Aquaman fantasies by talking with dolphins and . . . talking with more dolphins.

Wii vs. Wild

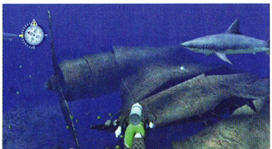
>ENDLESS OCEAN

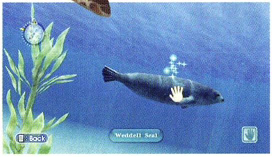
PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Arika • RELEASE: January 2008

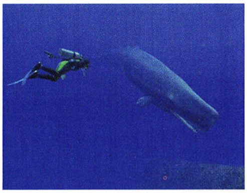
Don't think of Endless Ocean as a game. Instead of goals it offers experiences; instead of enemies it presents peaceful encounters with aquatic species; and instead of stress it delivers relaxation and wonder. It's like a smorgasbord, where you can taste a little or a lot of many dishes, and best of all, you can keep coming back for more. What's on the table? A beautiful marine environment filled with marvelous and exotic creatures; simple, intuitive Wii remote controls that anyone can learn in moments and that allow you to roam freely; favorite tunes loaded from your SD card to accompany your dive; swimming with a buddy via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection; teaching friendly dolphins to perform tricks; gift-earning opportunities; petting polar bears; catching glimpses of the mysterious giant squid and a legendary whale. Endless Ocean's game-like goals are mainly limited to acquiring a variety of dive suits and equipment, including a special deep-water air mixture that allows you to descend into Deep Valley—an abyss that remains off-limits until you have the right stuff. Oh, and you need to gain a little experience before you can dive at night. But the essential nature of Endless Ocean is an unbounded discovery experience, like a day at the aquarium or exploring a new trail, where every turn reveals a surprise. Who's it for? That's simple: Endless Ocean is sure to delight anyone who is curious about new worlds and experiences. —Scott P.

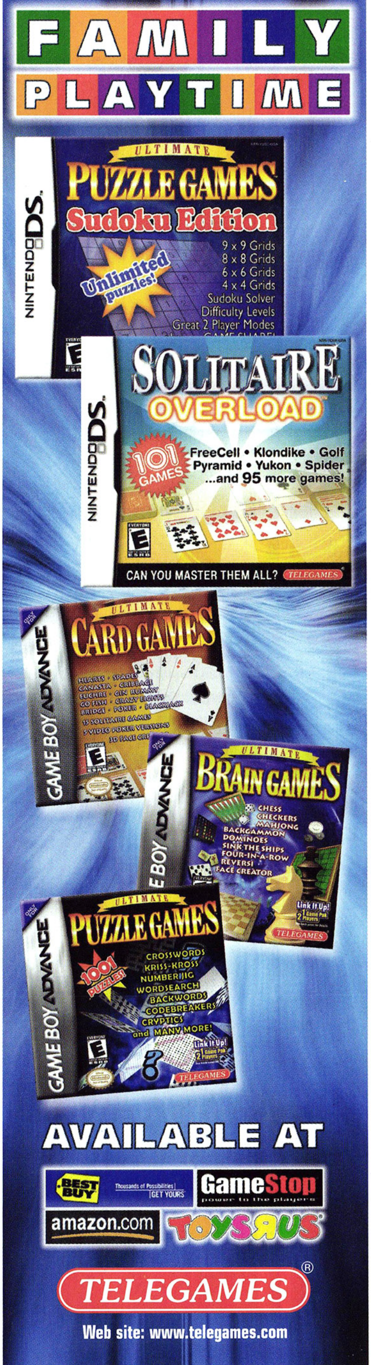


TRAINING
Use a signal or give the GO sign.









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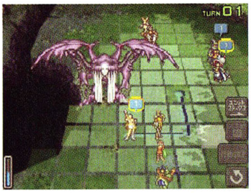
Bringin' the Heat

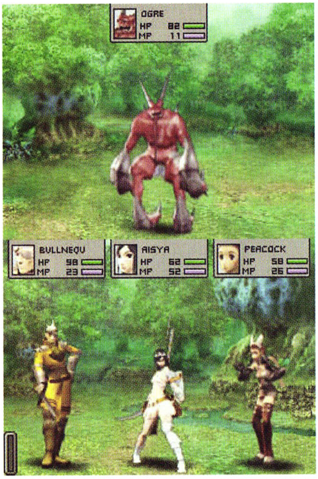
>ARCHAIC SEALED HEAT

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **MISTWALKER** • RELEASE: **TBD**

There's been a lot of buzz about Archaic Sealed Heat (ASH) since it came out in Japan (no word yet on a possible US release), and deservedly so. Developed by Mistwalker, the new studio headed by Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, ASH brings some desperately needed strategy-RPG love to the DS. The plot centers on a young queen whose kingdom was burnt to a crisp by some evil creature. Now her citizens are rising from the ashes to join her in discovering what force was behind the awful tragedy that befell her country. An incredible number of gorgeous cinematic sequences help explain the elaborate story.

Part tactics game, part traditional RPG, ASH presents an interesting blend of both genres. Each round, the player gets a certain number of points to move around the overhead grid or to engage in combat. Battles require a hefty number of points, forcing you to make tough decisions about when and how to attack. The combat system proceeds in a more-traditional RPG style, with plenty of weapons and special abilities at each character's disposal to take on a host of enemies. —CHRIS SH.





ASH boasts an epic story, gorgeous visuals, and a robust battle system that combines strategy with traditional RPG gameplay. What else would you expect from the creator of Final Fantasy?

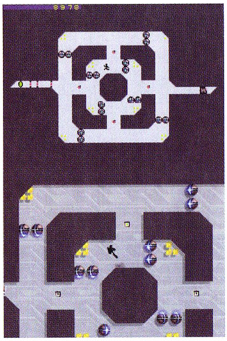
© 2007 Nintendo/MISTWALKER

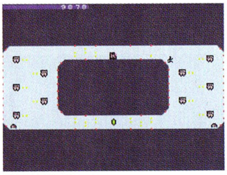
Grey Matter

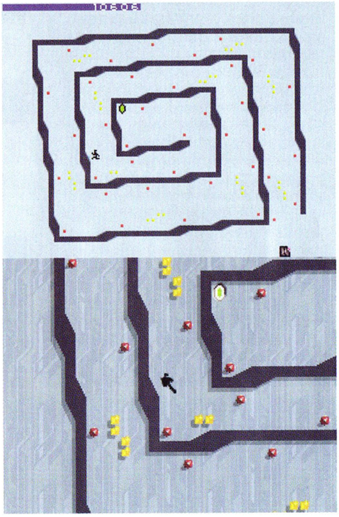
>N+

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **SILVERBIRCH STUDIOS**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

At first blush, N+ might not look like much—the grayscale environments and simple character design give you the sensation that you just booted the game off a floppy disk in your Apple II. But the primitive appearance is deceiving—behind this sequel to a Flash-based PC title is a challenging platformer that's hard to put down. In every stage, you must guide a stealthy ninja through a labyrinth of deadly obstacles to a switch that will open a door, then you enter the door to finish the level. Your score depends on how quickly you complete a level, along with how many coins you pick up along the way. The game throws every trick in the book at you over its 200 single-player and 100 co-op levels. But if that's not enough, N+ also features a robust level-creation tool for you to design even more brutal stages, then share them with your friends over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection or locally via single-card multiplayer. You can also compare your scores online with a complete leaderboard. —CHRIS SH.







N+ may not look like much, but it's got it where it counts. You'll need all your gaming skill to navigate the game's mazelike, trap-filled levels and get your ninja protagonist to the exit.

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READER REVIEW

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GAMER OF THE WEEK

Name: Ted Krinshaw

Age: 15

Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida

PROS: InverteBOTS rocks! I recommend being the king scorpion. You get killer claws and one wicked stinger. Definitely the best attack combos.

CONS: The match-ups can get kinda unrealistic. I don't care who you are, an amped-up ant could never take a teched-out tarantula. Game over.

Tom

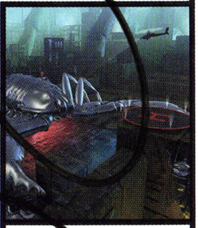
INVERTEBOTS

So there you sit on your couch, watching your favorite [illegible] on TV. You hear a thump, but you're too lazy to crank your head to the window to see. Your dog begins barking. You feel a thump in the ground. Your dog stops barking. Actually where is your dog? Then suddenly a stinger the size of a telephone pole comes crashing through your roof, directly into your mom's best china. You look outside to see a 60-foot robotic scorpion laying waste to your neighborhood. And all you can say is "Sweet."

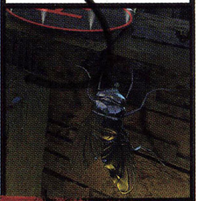
Enter the InverteBOTS, the newest creation from POWERSOURCE 360. A re-evolution of Rampage, InverteBOTS's premise is simple. If you can grasp it, you can smash it. Set in the not-too-distant future, the world's machines have become modeled after the most resilient organisms on Earth: bugs. Techno-exoskeleton superbugs with the meanest of mechanical mandibles make mayhem on mankind. And you're behind the wheel. Antennas. Apart from your pesky opponent sitting next to you, you'll have to fend off ranks of army ants, maniacal mayflies, and one bad mother sucker, the Mosquito.

It has multi-function modes of play, from one- and two-player missions to a free-for-all bug-bashing to a head-to-head torso-twisting roughhouse.

Lifelike graphics [illegible] with just enough computer animation to let you level a city block without feeling too bad. And with independent controlling options that allow you to move each arm and leg individually, it's not all that hard, either.



King Scorpion



Super Fly

Check you out at the party last night. Not the friend I went with. We need to talk. -AJ

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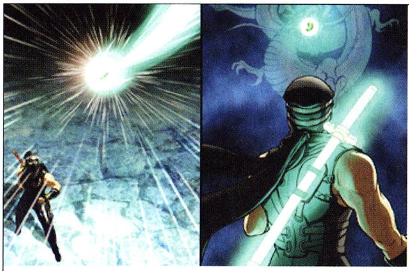
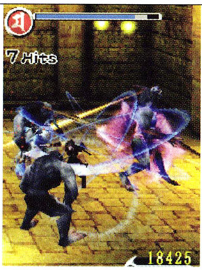
We take an in-depth look at the game set to redefine the action genre on DS—**Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword.**

Touch of Death

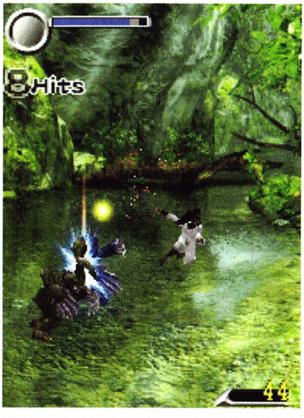
By Steve Thomason





Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden series has always been known for breaking new ground. The original title for the 8-bit NES was one of the first games to tell its story via cinematic cut-scenes. Ninja Gaiden for Xbox redefined the 3-D action genre with weapons-based combat as deep as any fighting game. And now, legendary ninja Ryu Hayabusa is set to blaze yet another trail with the first hardcore action game controlled entirely with a stylus.

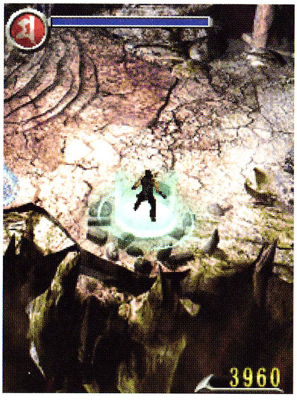
It seems an impossible task. Three years into the life of the DS, the vast majority of touch-centric games are more casual and deliberately paced. Titles that move at a faster clip typically rely on good old-fashioned button controls, with maybe a dash of touch-screen functionality thrown in here and there. But famed studio Team Ninja embarked on the development of their first handheld title looking to do something that no one else had accomplished. And after spending some quality time with a near-complete build of Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword, we're inclined to declare their efforts an unqualified success. In other words, this game kicks some serious ass.



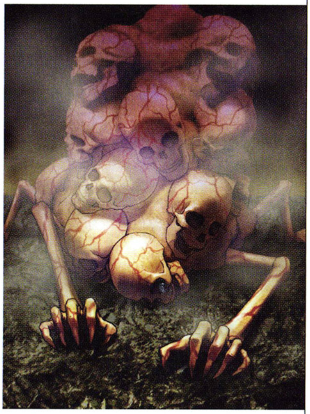
Ninja Gaiden for Xbox was one of that platform's best-looking titles, and Dragon Sword looks to continue that tradition.

Way of the Ninja

Dragon Sword takes place about six months after the events of Ninja Gaiden for Xbox. (Neither game has any narrative ties to the NES installments; the series was essentially rebooted with the Xbox title.) Having defeated the demonic Vigor Empire, Ryu has returned to his village for what will prove to be a brief respite. The game begins as our hero enjoys a friendly spar outside the village with his female protégé and fellow member of the Hayabusa clan, Momiji (whose conservative dress, it must be said, is surprising given Team Ninja's work on the Dead or Alive franchise). You actually control Momiji during this initial encounter and throughout the game's first chapter. After the training session, the two ninjas go their separate ways, and moments later, Momiji is ambushed by a mysterious new group of Fiends (the franchise's monstrous enemies, of which the Vigors were one sect). Though you're immediately thrown into battle, the first chapter serves as a tutorial of sorts, and does a nice job of gradually acclimating you to the interface. Controlling your character with the stylus feels a bit alien at first, but it's remarkable just how quickly that sensation goes away. Team Ninja has done a masterful job of translating each action to touch controls, and don't think for a moment that things have been watered down to accommodate the new interface. Combat is incredibly robust, allowing you to fly around the screen and pull off devastating combos befitting a master ninja. You can leap into the air, throw a flurry of shuriken at archers on a nearby cliff, then eliminate the enemies below by bringing your blade crashing down as you return to Earth. Soon you forget that you're even using the touch screen; it's just you and your ninja, slicing and dicing through anyone foolish enough to get in your way. That's the mark of a great control scheme. (For a closer look at exactly how the controls work, see the "Touch of Death" sidebar.)



With a new demon clan rising to power and threatening his people, Ryu will face all sorts of new monstrosities in Dragon Sword.

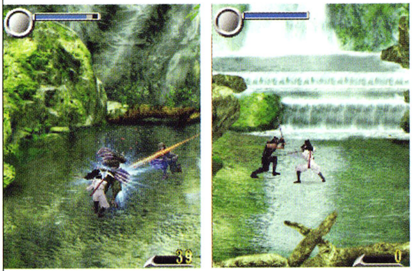


As the first chapter concludes, Momiji is . . . incapacitated, and you assume control of Ryu to begin chapter two. While defending the village from invading Fiends, our hero can stop and converse with townsfolk. The dialogue isn't nearly as significant as what you'd find in, say, an RPG, but it serves to flesh out the game's world, and occasionally provides helpful tips. Some of the villagers are a bit goofier than you might expect from Ninja Gaiden, which is probably intended to make the game more accessible to a broader age group (as is the conspicuous lack of blood and gore). It certainly doesn't detract from the action, but it does give the adventure a noticeably lighter vibe than its Xbox predecessor.

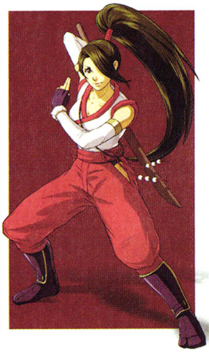
One of the characters you'll run into is Muramasa, the entrepreneurial old blacksmith who sold weapons and restorative items to Ryu in the previous game. After you save his weathered hide from a group of Fiends, Muramasa will reward you with your first Ninpo (ninja-speak for magic). To cast it, you'll tap the icon at the top of the screen to pause the action, then use the stylus to trace the Sanskrit letter that appears. Successfully casting this particular Ninpo summons a huge ball of flames, which you can guide around the screen to incinerate multiple foes. Casting Ninpo depletes Ryu's ki, but you can replenish it in one of two ways: by reaching a save point (which also refills the ninja's health meter) or by collecting red essence from a fallen adversary. As in the Xbox game, vanquished enemies leave behind glowing orbs that represent their essence. Red essence refills your ki, blue essence gives you health, and gold essence can be used as currency (more on that later). Naturally, dispatching your foes with style is highly encouraged; the longer the combo you can string together, the more essence you'll receive.

Fortunately, there's no shortage of demonic monstrosities on which to hone your skills. Dragon Sword frequently introduces new types of enemies, requiring you to adapt and utilize every trick in your arsenal. One thing that remains consistent, however, is that your opponents always come in waves, and if you want to avoid being surrounded (and subsequently pummeled), you've got to keep moving. Ryu isn't some hulking brawler who can stand there and slug it out with his attackers. The ninja's greatest strengths are his speed and agility, and survival is contingent on you taking full advantage of those traits. Once you've got a little practice under your belt, it makes for some of the most frenetic, exhilarating action ever seen on a handheld. And series vets can still expect a stiff challenge, especially on Head Ninja difficulty.

Though the focus is squarely on combat, Ryu will also have to contend with environmental hazards from time to time, such as boulders that rumble toward our hero as he tries to ascend a mountain path. There are some light puzzle elements, as



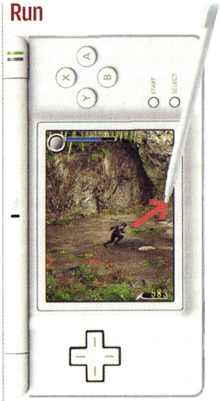
Fiend hunter Rachel is nowhere to be found, but Ryu's new female partner, Momiji, is more than capable of holding her own.



LIVE BY THE STYLUS

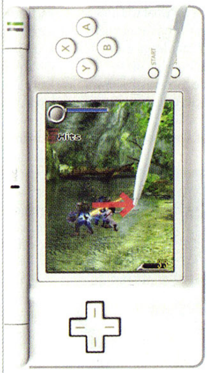
Nearly every action in Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword is performed using the stylus. This is the first time a hardcore action game has attempted such a feat, so we thought it might be helpful to take a closer look at how it works. Note that you hold the DS sideways, book-style, as you would in Brain Age or Hotel Dusk. And yes southpaws, there is an option to play left-handed.

Run



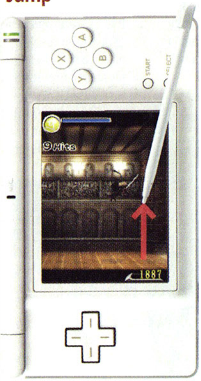
To move Ryu, you simply slide the stylus in whichever direction you want him to go. The camera typically keeps Ryu near the center of the screen, and the farther from him you point the stylus, the faster he'll run.

Attack



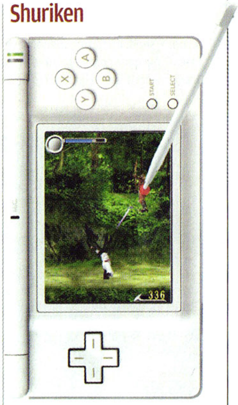
Attacking is accomplished by sliding the stylus over an enemy. If the target is out of reach, Ryu will automatically close the distance before striking. Horizontal, vertical, and diagonal strikes can be strung together for myriad combos.

Jump



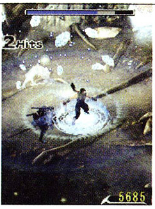
An upward stroke of the stylus will get your ninja airborne. Sliding the stylus directly over Ryu will make him jump straight up, while sliding it upward elsewhere on the screen will cause him to leap in that direction. Naturally, a second upward stroke while Ryu is in midair results in a double jump.

Shuriken

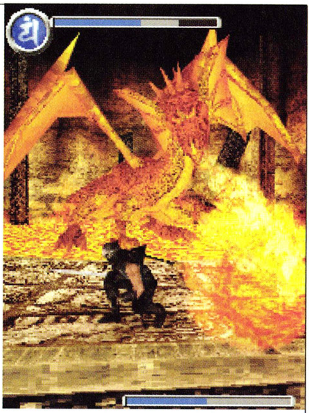


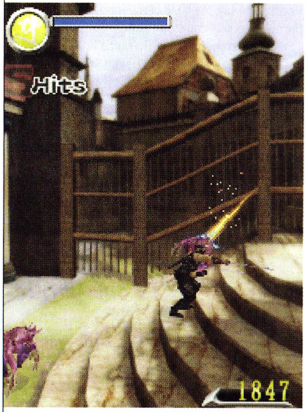
To throw shuriken, you tap the stylus on your desired target. You can even toss the deadly projectiles while Ryu is in midair, and the ninja's supply is unlimited, so you're able to fling to your heart's content.

well, though nothing much more complicated than throwing shuriken at globes when they're glowing the proper color to open a nearby gate—just little things here and there to fill the time between carving up bad guys.



Right: Ever wonder why there aren't dragons flying around in the real world? Ninjas killed them all.





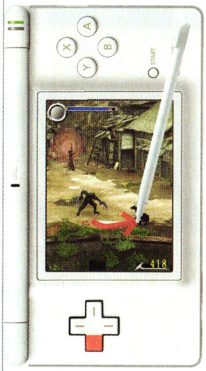
Of course, any action game worth its salt needs some heavyweight bosses with which to do battle. After saving the village, you'll come face-to-face with the game's first bigwig, a massive fire-breathing dragon with an appetite for ninja. The camera switches to a zoomed-in view behind Ryu, allowing you to better focus on your adversary, and lending the showdown a cinematic flare. Even on the DS's small screen, these epic encounters are a sight to behold.

Packed to the Hilt

Hailing from the team responsible for some of the most impressive visuals in recent years, it should come as no surprise that Dragon Sword's presentation is on the cutting edge. The game employs polygonal character models on prerendered backgrounds to stunning effect. As you move Momiji or Ryu through each area, it's hard not to stop and gawk. The level of detail in the environments is absolutely astonishing, from the lush foliage of a forest to the ornately decorated interior of a majestic monastery. Many of the locales also boast little animated touches that help bring them to life, be it the rippling water of a gently flowing stream or the flickering light of a candle. And because the backgrounds are prerendered, more polygons can be devoted to the character models. Ryu's is particularly impressive, and all the more so in motion thanks to some silky-smooth animation. As much of a revelation as the controls are, it's the graphics that nearly steal the show. You've never seen a game on the DS that looks like this.

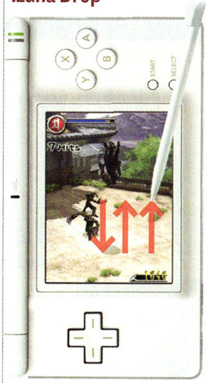
While minor story events are handled via the in-game engine, the most important narrative moments are presented as comic-book-style cinematics. These cut-scenes are beautifully illustrated, and make us yearn for a Ninja Gaiden

Block/Roll



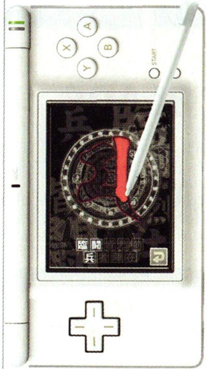
Blocking is the only action executed via a button press. Ryu will take a defensive stance when you press any directon on the Control Pad or any of the face buttons. If you slide the stylus while blocking, Ryu will perform an evasive roll.

Izuna Drop



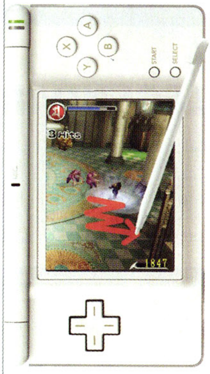
Ryu's devastating Izuna Drop is performed by sliding the stylus downward to stun your foe, upward to send him into the air, then upward again to make Ryu leap up, grab his opponent, and piledrive the poor sap's skull into the ground.

Ninpo



To cast one of Ryu's magic Ninpo, you tap the icon in the upper-left corner of the screen, select which spell you want to use, then trace the Sanskrit character that appears. The stylus is meant to represent Ryu's finger as he casts the spell.

Ultimate Technique



The Ultimate Technique requires you to slide the stylus back and forth over Ryu as quickly as possible. The ninja will gather energy, then unleash a powerful spin attack. Ryu is vulnerable while the move is charging, but it can obliterate every enemy onscreen if you pull it off.

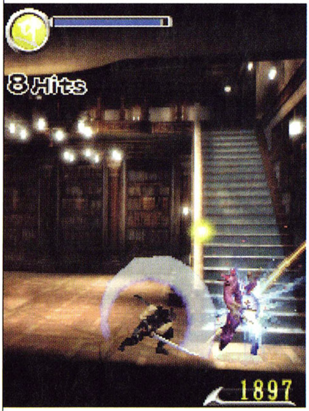
manga. There's no voice-acting aside from various grunts and battle cries, but the sound effects (especially some of the subtler ones like birds chirping and waterfalls splashing) create a nice ambience. When you're not clashing swords and rending demons, that is. The music—a combination of remixed tracks and all-new compositions—is rousing when it needs to be, and stays out of the way the rest of the time.

Upon defeating the first boss, you must return to the village to find Muramasa. Though the game is divided into chapters, most areas are interconnected and there is some backtracking involved. It's not nearly as extensive as in something like Metroid or Castlevania, but you'll need to retrace your steps every once in a while to acquire a new item or ability. In this case, after waking the slumbering blacksmith by shouting his name into the microphone (you don't actually have to shout, but it's always more fun to keep your fellow commuters guessing as to the state of your mental health), you'll receive the lightning Ninpo. Only with said magic can you destroy the rubble blocking your path to the next area.

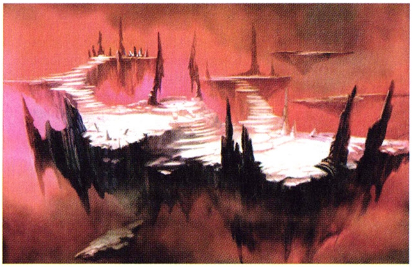
Before you head out, however, Muramasa will offer to sell you some handy wares in exchange for the gold essence you've collected. His initial inventory includes items that increase your health meter, upgrade your sword, or bestow you with a new Ninpo that serves as a temporary force field. Additional goods become available for purchase as you progress through the game. Unlike the Xbox title, in which the player could switch between multiple weapons, the Dragon Sword will always be your primary blade. That doesn't mean your ass-kicking repertoire is anything less than impressive; you can obtain up to three ranged weapons, seven Ninpo, and a wide variety of special techniques (including series staples, such as the brain-busting Izuna Drop).

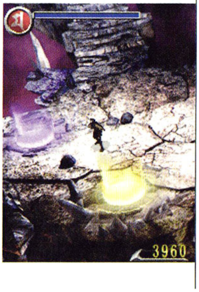
From the village, you'll travel to the surprising source of the Fiend invasion: the Vigor Empire. Upon returning to the site of his prior adventure, Ryu discovers that a new evil has ascended to power after the fall of Vigor's previous rulers. A pair of ancient demons named Nicchae and Ishataros are seeking to restore the empire, and once again pose a dire threat to humanity. Needless to say, the head of the Hayabusa clan is the only one who can stop them.

Unfortunately, we'll have to wait a little longer to see how it all unfolds. Dragon Sword has missed its original Holiday 2007 release date, and is now slated for early 2008. Team Ninja is using that extra time to add new features (such as Wi-Fi leaderboards) and to ensure the high level of polish for which the franchise is known. Besides, as any good ninja knows, patience is a virtue.



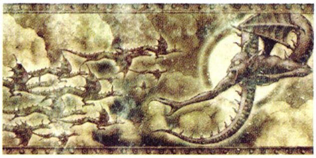
Below: Because all of the backgrounds are pre-rendered, the end results are startlingly close to the original concept illustrations.

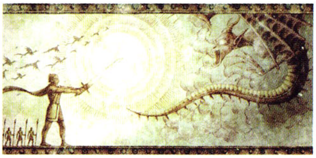


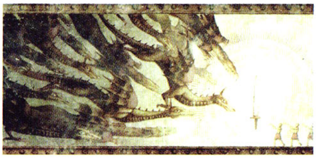


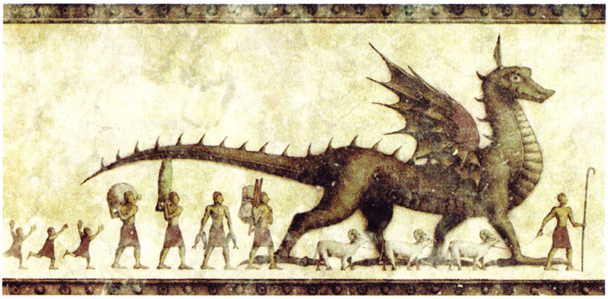
LEGENDARY BLADE

As the game title suggests, the Dragon Sword plays a central role in this new Ninja Gaiden. Ryu's ancient blade originates from a time when humans and dragons lived together. After ages of peaceful coexistence, an evil black dragon appeared and threatened to take over the world. The other dragons put their spirit into the sword and gave it to the humans to slay the black dragon. Ever since, the sword has been handed down through the Hayabusa clan, and it came to Ryu during the events of Ninja Gaiden for Xbox. Expect more of this powerful blade's secrets to be revealed in the DS game.









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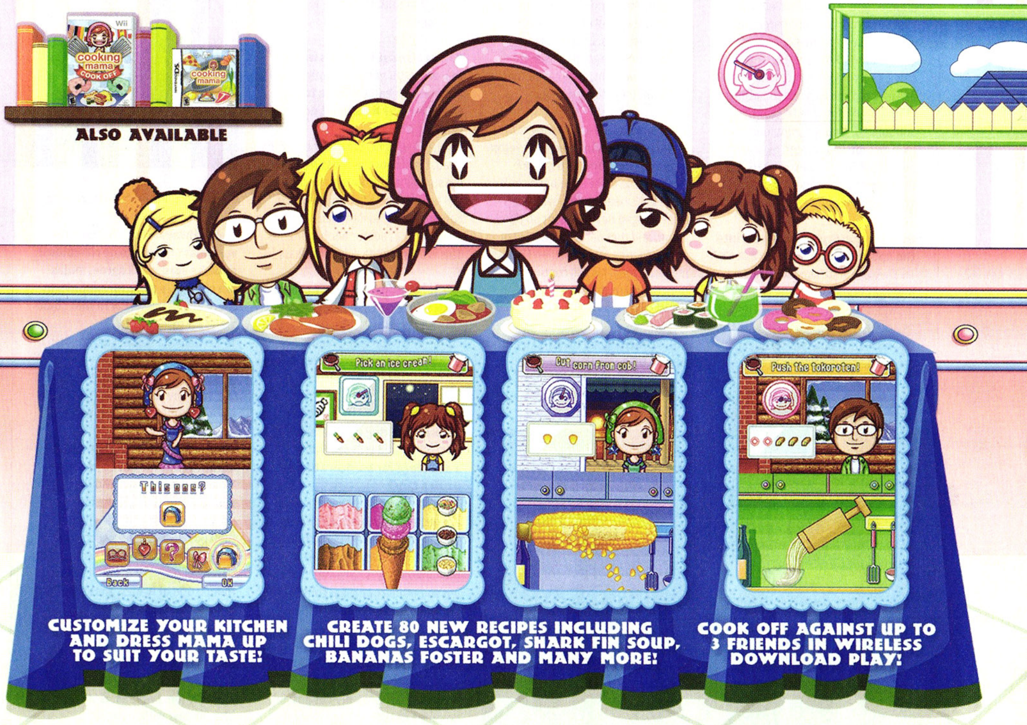

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A WORD WITH THE MASTER

To learn more about Dragon Sword and its development, we spoke with famed Team Ninja producer Tomonobu Itagaki.

Nintendo Power: Now that development on Dragon Sword is wrapping up, how are you feeling about the project? Do you feel that you've achieved everything you set out to?
Tomonobu Itagaki: There are some areas where I feel I achieved what I set out to do, and other areas in which we've exceeded our own expectations. For example, the comic book-style storytelling that we use in the game was not something I thought of when the DS was first announced. That's a completely new feature that was created by one of our artists. It's very exciting to see the project come together in a form greater than even I imagined.

Does Dragon Sword's story tie into the upcoming Ninja Gaiden 2 at all?
TI: They are quite similar in the fact that they both portray the conflict between the Hayabusa Ninja Clan and its archrival, the Black Spider Clan. Playing both games will no doubt reveal the connection even further.

Any new revelations regarding Dragon Sword that you can share with us?
TI: The number of chapters has increased again, even though the game is fast nearing completion! [Laughs] This is no doubt due to the incredible appeal of the digital comic book cut-scenes. I told the team about a month ago that I wanted to see more of them, and maybe that had something to do with it.

What were some of the new challenges you encountered in developing your first handheld game?
TI: Of course there have been challenges. It's been almost two years since I began development on this game, and that period consisted of one challenge after another. I have no doubt that this will continue up until the point the game is completely finished.

You've mentioned that you wanted to do a DS game because it presented a fresh challenge for you and your team. Do you feel you've grown as a result of this project? How has it made you a better game designer?
TI: I don't feel that it is right to talk about that until the game is actually done.

You've also said that you wanted to make a DS game for your daughter. Has she had a chance to play the game yet? If so, what does she think of it?
TI: This is what my daughter told me: "Dad, thanks for this amazing game. I'm sure all of the boys in my class will be thrilled!" Now you realize, of course, that I had intended to make a game for her, not for her boy friends. This is a difficult task indeed! [Laughs]

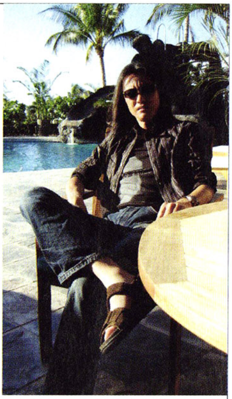
Has it been difficult reining things back to prevent the game from getting an M rating?
TI: Just the opposite; I think it would be harder to make an M-rated game for the DS in the first place.

How do you strike that balance between making the game more accessible and still providing a challenge for hardcore Ninja Gaiden fans?
TI: I've never thought specifically about striking a balance. I've lived my life doing what I want to do. The representative curve that resulted from that philosophy is balanced, but it's not something one must consciously think about before taking action.

What do stylus controls bring to Ninja Gaiden in your opinion?
TI: We were able to achieve a feeling of speed that is simply not possible on home consoles, because of the player's ability to control the character by touch. This will be a completely new experience for everyone out there.

What do you feel Ninja Gaiden offers that no previous DS action game has?
TI: Definitely the sense of speed in the game. The graphics are also quite beautiful, of course.

Is there one aspect of Dragon Sword that you're most proud of?
TI: I believe I have made something that no one else could, in terms of this being the pinnacle of action gaming.



We've always found the "pirates vs. ninjas" debate to be ridiculous; as we're sure you'll agree, ninjas are obviously more formidable. Is there any being on Earth that could stand up to a ninja?
TI: The only thing that can stand up to a ninja is another ninja. In other words, whom would you hire to protect you if by some chance you made enemies out of a group of ninjas?

Which games from other publishers are you currently enjoying?
TI: I've been playing various titles. The consoles that get the most use at my house are the Wii and the Xbox 360. What have I played recently? Hmmm, let me see... Earth Defense Force 2017, SimCity DS, Halo 3, God of War 2... that's a pretty good summary.

Any chance we'll see Ryu in Super Smash Bros. Brawl?
TI: [Laughs] That sounds like it would be really fun. I wonder, is Mr. Sakurai also familiar with ninjas?

Last time we spoke, you mentioned that a lot of the young guys on the Dragon Sword team wanted to continue making games for the DS. Have you guys had a chance to think about what you'd like to do next on the platform (and can you give us any hints)?
TI: We want as many people as possible to play Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword. This is a feeling shared by everyone on the team. As for what happens next, don't you think that maybe we should cross that bridge when we come to it?

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Faster, Grasshopper!

Are you a ninja master or a ninja dog? **Ninja Reflex** challenges Wii players to discover how good their gaming skills really are.

By Chris Slate

Think you're a master gamer with lightning-quick fingers and unmatched button-tapping skills? Let Ninja Reflex be the judge of that.

The Wii- and DS-exclusive title—from Electronic Arts and brand-new developer Sanzaru Games—will test your game-playing abilities like never before in six intense ninja challenges. Your reflexes will be examined, your reaction time will be measured, and you and your friends will finally know who among you has the best raw gaming skills. If your abilities are found lacking, don't worry—the sensei will shape you into a master ninja.

During our exclusive first play session with Ninja Reflex, we discovered just how challenging and addictive the competitions can be. The six events are Katana (in which you defend and counterattack with a sword), Shuriken (a shooting gallery-type game), Nunchaku (where you smash incoming barrels), Hashi (catching flies with chopsticks), Koi (grabbing fish with your bare hands), and Hotaru (spotting fireflies as they appear). Each has three difficulty levels, several variations, and changing goals, all meant to improve your mental sharpness, reaction speed, and hand-eye coordination. The events are simple and straightforward—and ironically, don't even use the nunchuk attachment—but have been designed to be played over and over as you strive to reach perfection.

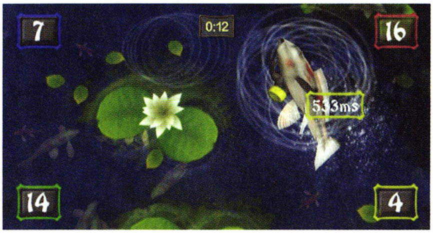
This game should really be experienced with three friends, as the four of you will no doubt talk a lot of smack as you race to prove who has the best skills. Even in challenges with goals other than having the fastest reaction time, it's always displayed to add extra heat to the competition. Adding to the multiplayer fun is the option to choose your own "ninja name," which is randomly generated from over 25,000 word combinations. Under the intimidating moniker of Rising Shark, I went head-to-head against Deadly Rainbow, Crouching Cricket, and Lonely Wolf.

There's also a single-player mode to sink your teeth into. Here, the sensei guides you through the various challenges and difficulty levels of each event, and ups your belt rank as you prove your worth (there are 11 ranks in all, with third-degree black belt as your ultimate goal). When the tasks become a bit too daunting, you can enter the game's Meditation mode to relax and calm your mind—which just might keep you from breaking furniture after repeatedly failing a particularly nasty challenge.

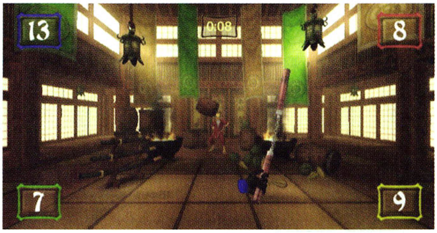
A DS edition of Ninja Reflex is also in the works, and both versions are planned for a March release. With this game and Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword on the way, could we be at the beginning of a ninja resurgence? We know of at least one more ninja-rific title in the works, but we've been sworn to secrecy...for now.

The Path to Becoming a Ninja

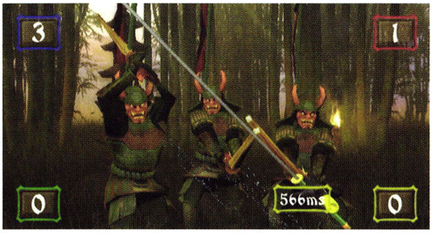
Each of the game's six events can be challenged in several variations and at three difficulty levels. While every event tests the same basic skills—such as reflex time and quick recognition—each provides its own unique challenge. Let's take a deeper look at the training that will shape you into a better gamer—and a master ninja!



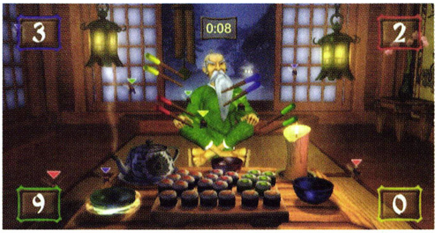
KOI Normally bigger fish would be better, but in this event it's the smaller, quicker fish that earn you the big points. This challenge tests your reflexes and your ability to hold a hand-shaped cursor steady over fast-moving fish. After successfully trailing a fish for a few moments, it will rise to the water's surface, where you can snatch it by pressing A and B. A grab will splash and scare away other nearby koi, so every attempt counts for a lot. The action gets even more intense in multiplayer, with people often competing for the same fish.



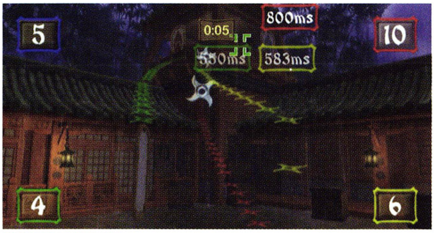
NUNCHAKU In a true showing of tough love, the sensei throws barrels and other objects that you must smash with your nunchaku before they smash you. You must constantly keep your nunchaku slowly swinging in the pattern of an infinity symbol, and when it's time to strike, you quickly swing the remote in any direction. The pace picks up as the event goes on, and the speed and timing of the items changes to throw off your rhythm; you'll often destroy a large barrel to find a second, smaller object flying in right behind it.



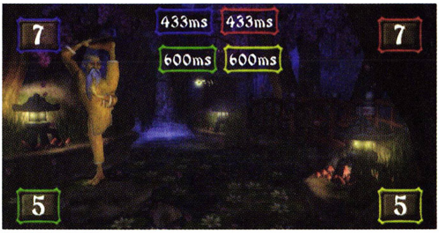
KATANA Here you'll use a ninja's most basic weapon—his sword. This is an "on rails" level; you're automatically taken from encounter to encounter as in light-gun games like Time Crisis and Virtua Cop. In a bamboo forest, waves of enemies will appear and attack. First you must block their strikes with your sword by holding the Wii remote to the left, right, or overhead. After blocking, counter with a fast attack of your own by slashing the remote in any direction. Tougher enemies will force you to block multiple times before you can counter.



HASHI This event has you catching flies with chopsticks at a pace that would put Mr. Miyagi to shame. (Haven't seen *Karate Kid* 2 in a while? Shame on you.) You point your Wii remote at the screen to move your chopsticks over a zig-zagging fly, which you then grab by pressing A and B. Next, you place your morsel in the appropriate bowl (the one that's currently lit) before moving on to the next target. The flies move really fast; it's easy to grab one out of a swarm, but the difficulty ramps up when you're trying to zero in on one lone, fast fly.



SHURIKEN In this on-rails, first-person "shooting gallery"-type event, you use throwing stars to take out ninja targets while avoiding the ones that show geishas. This isn't easy since the targets move quickly and pop on and off the screen. To throw a shuriken, you first lock on to a target by aiming your cursor at it and pressing the A Button. Then you swing the Wii remote to let the star fly—the faster the swing, the faster the throw. Level variations include superfast targets and having to hit a lone ninja in a crowd of geishas.

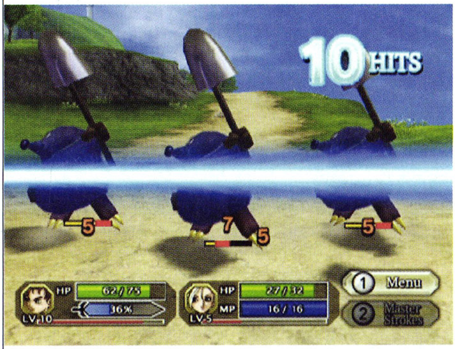


HOTARU This is the simplest event, but it can be the most nerve-racking. All you have to do is hit the A Button when you see a tiny firefly light up on the screen. Sometimes it will light up in a color that corresponds to just one player, causing all other competitors to lose points if they recklessly hit A. Each player's reaction time will be displayed, the fastest earning a point for the victor. This is the game's purest test of a player's reaction time, and trust us: proud gamers will not want to concede that somebody else is the quicker draw.

THE WAY OF THE SWORD

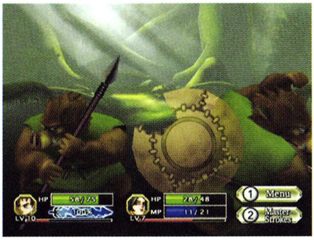
Square Enix's classic RPG series gets some swing in its step with Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors for Wii. By Justin Cheng

It's virtually impossible to discuss Dragon Quest without mentioning the series' immense popularity among Japanese gamers. On their side of the Pacific, DQ games can only be released on a Sunday or a holiday due to concerns that people will play hooky to pick up the latest release. The first Dragon Quest for Wii, Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors, sold a record-setting 305,000 copies within its first week of going on sale in Japan, and is, to date, the console's best-selling third-party title in that country. This is a big one, folks.

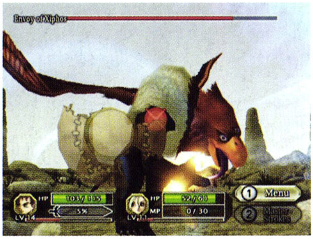


So Dragon Quest Swords is obviously a big deal for Wii owners, and with good reason. While sticklers for detail will notice that this game is not the next installment of the main Dragon Quest series (that would be the upcoming Dragon Quest IX for DS), Swords retains much of what makes the series as a whole so fantastic: the characters, the music, the RPG elements, and, yes, the Slimes. (Can't have a Dragon Quest without Slimes, now can we?) More importantly, the series' "Big Three," as developer Square Enix affectionately calls them—series creator Yuji Horii, artist Akira Toriyama, and composer Koichi Sugiyama (plus composer Manami Matsumae)—had a hand in the game's creation. This alone should cause longtime Dragon Quest fans to preorder the game right this second.

But maybe you're not already a fan; maybe you don't have the patience for an RPG. In that case, this could very well be the first Dragon Quest game for you. You won't find the traditional type of dungeon crawling and stat raising in Swords. It has all of the Dragon Quest charm, but it's a much more arcade-style experience than other games in the series. It adds new user-friendly Wii controls and a first-person perspective (detailed later), and still delivers on the series' hallmark of spinning compelling tales. You play as a young man living in the kingdom of Avalonia. It's been five years since the evil Deathbringer was defeated, and it's a time of peace—until monsters start reappearing, that is. And the queen has been seen wearing a strange mask that seems to be connected to this resurgence of monsters, leaving you and your companions (see the column to the right) to unravel the mystery.



Hold the B Button to bring up your shield and move it around with the Wii remote. While it will break over time, a broken shield is better than no shield, right?



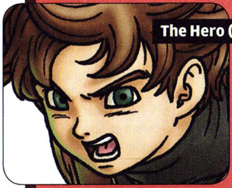
Take Up Arms

There's none of the Dragon Quest series' admittedly slow-paced, turn-based gameplay this time around. No, the big new feature is the Wii control. Just swing the Wii remote like a sword, slashing vertically, horizontally, or diagonally to attack your enemies, and the game replicates your movements exactly, making for a far more interactive adventure. Oh, sure, there are menus to use healing items or your allies' spells (more on the latter point later), but for the most part it's just you, with Wii remote in hand, slicing up all manner of beasties.

Don't think this means mindless waggling, however: each monster has a specific pattern that requires some strategy to defeat. For example, Slimes usually attack in numbers, so you should wait for them to line up in a row so you can dis-

Party Time

Unlike some other RPGs, Dragon Quest Swords keeps your party pretty small. Here's a quick rundown of your group.

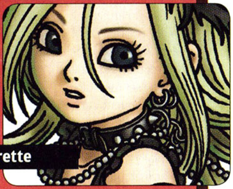


The Hero (You)

Like in other Dragon Quest games, you name your character whatever you want (no matter what you choose, Fleurette calls you Blade even though you look nothing like Wesley Snipes). You've just turned 16 at the game's outset, meaning you're now a man. Congratulations!

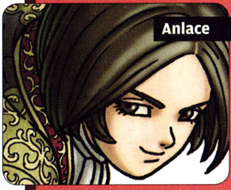
Claymore

Claymore is your father, who was a famous swordsman before he lost his hand. Now he uses magic to slay monsters when he's not drinking or chasing after women. Quite the role model, this one.



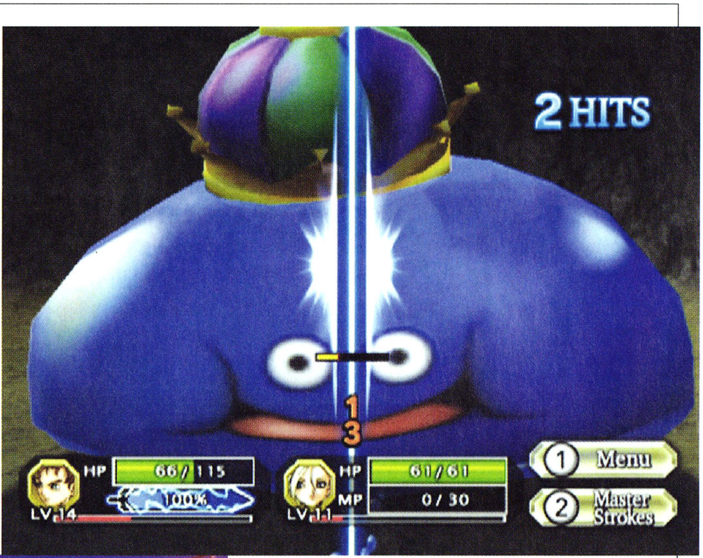
Fleurette

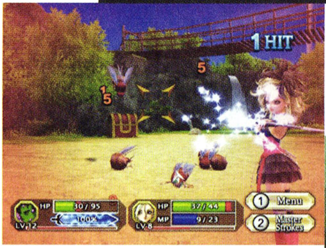
You probably wouldn't know it by the way she dresses, but Fleurette was planning to become a nun at the Chapel of the Merciful Goddess in Avalonia—until her brother fell ill and she left the convent to take care of him.



Anlace

The Prince of Avalonia, who's trying to find his mother, the queen. He doesn't seem to have quite as colorful a past as the other members of your party.





[Above] It wouldn't be Dragon Quest without Slimes of all sizes. [Left] Members of your party, like Fleurette here, appear onscreen whenever they cast their spells.

patch them easily with a single slice. Archers stay outside of your sword's attack range, so you have to use your blade to hit their arrows back at them (a blue marker appears onscreen, telling you where the arrows are aimed). Often it's best to lock onto a specific area by pressing A, which helps you focus your attacks. Other monsters require that you block their melee attacks (hold B in combat to bring up your shield—be careful, though, as it deteriorates with use), which leaves them open for a counterattack. Some have said that the flow of combat is akin to the NES classic Punch-Out!!, and that is certainly an apt comparison. This is especially true when it comes to boss fights, which require observation, patience, and timing—though these battles can be expedited with your Master Stroke super attacks (see the "Master Strokes" sidebar on the page to the right).

As powerful as your sword is, however, using magic is sometimes necessary—though most of the time, it usually isn't your character doing the casting. You have allies on your journey, after all, and they can more than hold their own in battle. Your father, Claymore, uses offense-focused spells; Fleurette is just the opposite with her defense-focused spells; and Prince Anlace uses a little of each. You usually don't control them directly—you can set their tactics to frequent, rare, or balanced magic usage—but you can use their magic manually through the menu if you're so inclined (just be sure to keep an eye on their MP).

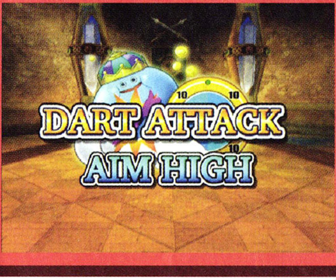
Keep It Simple

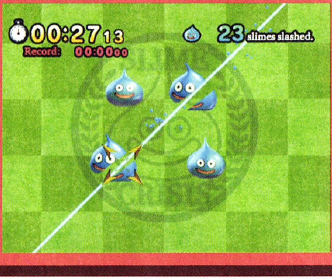
While prior Dragon Quests thrust you into the first-person perspective only during battles, Dragon Quest Swords is almost entirely (aside from some cut scenes) played in the first person, further immersing you in the world of Avalonia. Better still, you need only the Wii remote to play the game, which lends a simplicity that's ideal for series newcomers. All movement for exploring the hub city—where you'll purchase items and equipment, interact with the locals, receive quests, and play minigames such as the cleverly named Slime Crisis (see the "Take A Break" sidebar)—uses the Control Pad. Press up (or B) to move forward,

6 HITS
① Menu
② Master Strokes

Take A Break

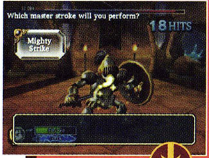
It's not *all* questing in Dragon Quest Swords: you can explore the town and play a couple minigames while you're at it. There's Slime Crisis, in which you try to slice 100 Slimes as fast as you can, and Dart Attack, where you're given a dartboard-like shield that you use to block an archer's arrows/darts. Even better, you can play these games with up four players, so invite your friends!

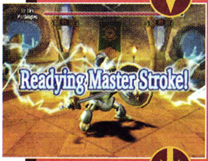


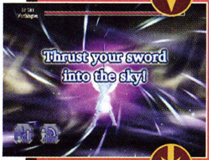


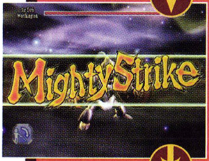
Master Strokes

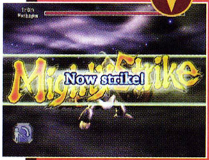
As you fight, your Master Stroke meter will fill up. Once it's full, you can unleash a powerful Master Stroke attack such as the Mighty Strike. To pull it off, you have to complete a minigame to unleash a devastating attack.

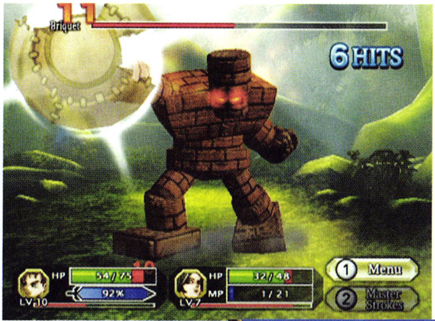

Which master stroke will you perform?
18 HITS
Mighty Strike

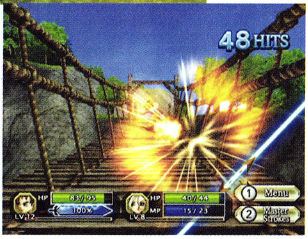

Readying Master Stroke!


Thrust your sword into the sky!


Mighty Strike


Mighty Strike
Now strike!


11
Briquet
6 HITS
HP 54/75
92%
LV.10
HP 32/48
MP 1/21
LV.7
1 Menu
2 Master Strokes

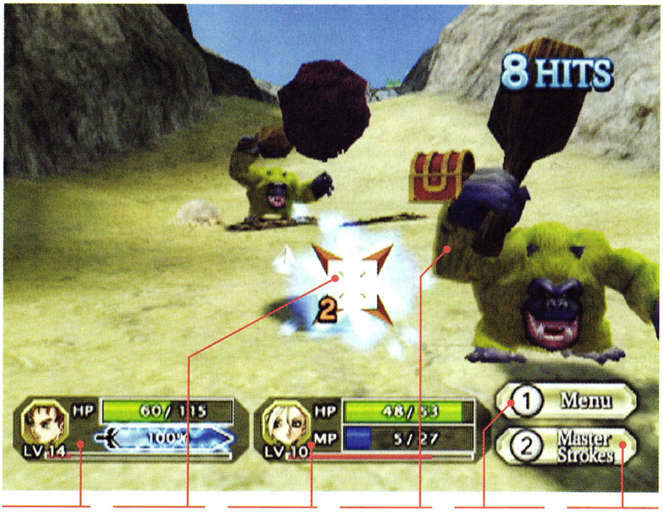

48 HITS
HP 83/95
100%
LV.12
HP 40/44
MP 15/23
LV.8
1 Menu
2 Master Strokes

down to move backward, and left or right to turn in the corresponding direction. You interact with objects using A, and run by holding both up on the Control Pad and B. Simple, no?

It gets even simpler once you set out on a quest. The first mission, the Walk of the Worthy, is a rite of passage for those who have turned 16 and, thus, have become men. It has you treading down a verdant field and through a dark, monster-laden cave.

Venturing through the environment involves little more than running down a path—similar to an on-rails shooter, only with random encounters. There are objects to explore along the way (patches of grass, rocks, etc.) that hold gold coins and other useful goodies. You'll come to the occasional fork in the road, but you never have to worry about choosing the wrong path: if you reach a dead end, the game handily teleports you back to the initial fork.

Dragon Quest Swords has exploration and combat aplenty, all with signature RPG elements such as experience points and inventory management. The game is a faster-paced, less overwhelming experience than its predecessors, making it a perfect entry point for series newcomers. The game releases in early '08, so be sure to keep an eye on the next couple issues of Power for the full review.


8 HITS
2
HP 60/115
100%
LV.14
HP 48/53
MP 5/27
LV.10
1 Menu
2 Master Strokes

Your main character's current level, Hit Points, and Master Stroke meter.

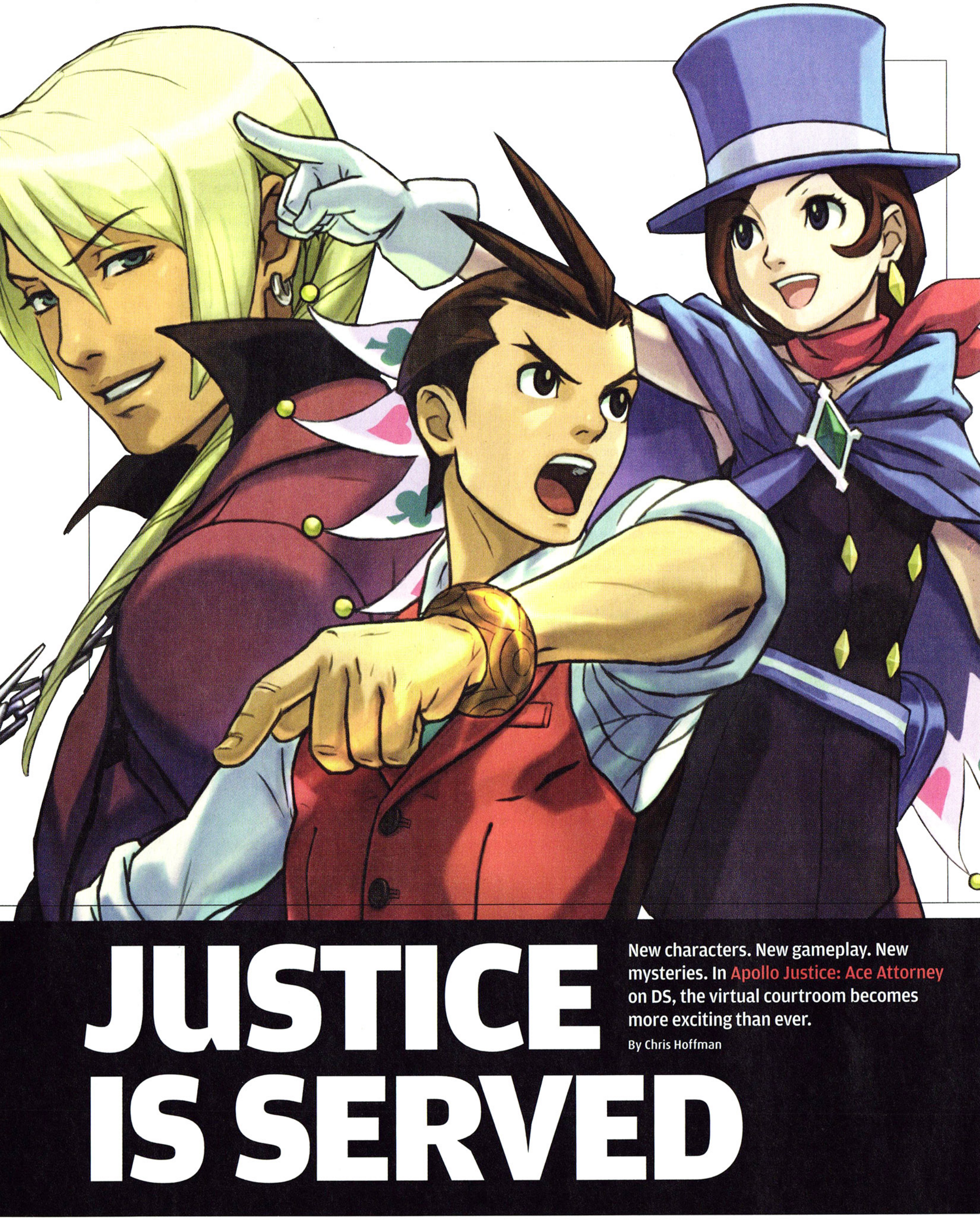
Your focus point; where you're currently aiming the Wii remote. Press A to lock on to that area.

Your ally, their current level, Hit Points, and Magic Points.

The bad guys. You can start slashing them if they're in range, but you may have to press B to bring up your shield and block their attacks.

Open the menu to use healing items or to force your allies to use specific magic spells.

When your Master Stroke meter is completely filled, you can press the 2 button and initiate your Master Stroke attack.



JUSTICE IS SERVED

New characters. New gameplay. New mysteries. In Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney on DS, the virtual courtroom becomes more exciting than ever.

By Chris Hoffman

When you step into an Ace Attorney courtroom, you can forget pretty much anything you know about real law. Stodgy lawyers, stifling procedures, unintelligible legal jargon—you won't find them here. What you will find is fast-paced, back-and-forth, anime-inspired action and stories that keep you on the edge of your seat.

A NEW FACE OF JUSTICE

As devotees of the Ace Attorney series know, each trial is a battle of wits in which you must defend the innocent and expose the guilty. In the courtroom you'll listen to witnesses' testimonies, press them for more information, and throw evidence in their faces to prove they're lying; outside the courtroom you'll investigate crime scenes—point-and-click style—to discover clues, gather facts, collect evidence, speak with observers, and access new locations that enable you to piece together the truth of what really happened. As the first game in the series created exclusively for DS (the three Phoenix Wright titles were originally released on Game Boy Advance in Japan), Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney maintains the same basic gameplay and dramatic-yet-lighthearted atmosphere of its predecessors while reinvigorating the series with numerous new elements.

The most obvious of the changes is the introduction of the game's new main character: Apollo Justice. Though younger and less experienced than Phoenix Wright—his red vest and pointy bangs make him look more like a prep-school student than a lawyer—Apollo is just as determined and likable as his foregoer, and his newcomer status gives players the opportunity to experience the crazy courtroom antics from a fresh perspective.

"[Apollo's] an energetic and enthusiastic young man at his core," says producer Minae Matsukawa. "When you first meet and control him, it's like a world of difference. Players might feel as though they might actually lose a case with this inexperienced rookie!"

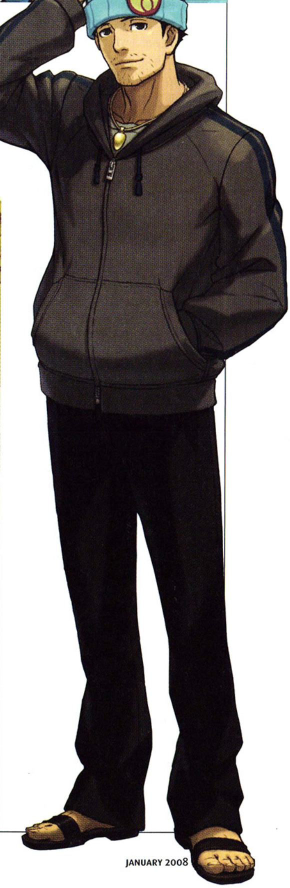
Furthermore, the developers at Capcom wanted to introduce a new protagonist to signify that the game was being developed from the ground up for the DS, and to provide an ideal jumping-on point for players who aren't familiar with the series. "To the Japanese market and the Japanese fans, the fact that we were making a new game for the Nintendo DS meant a lot to us," Matsukawa proclaims. "We wanted to start out fresh, and that included changing the main character. Basically, we were able to create a fresh starting point for everyone—the development team, veterans of the series, and for new players alike, and I think that's a very good thing."

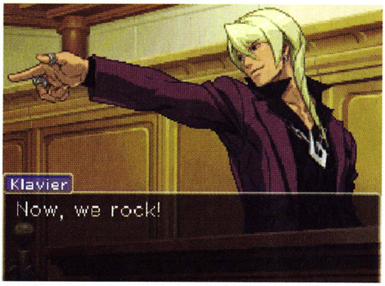
THE BEST DEFENSE

Even though Phoenix is out of the spotlight, he's not gone. In fact, he plays a prominent role in the game's first case. Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney is set seven years after Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations, and in those intervening years Phoenix has lost his attorney's badge and been reduced to gambling and playing piano (poorly) for meager pay in various dives. Even worse—he's been accused of murder.

"Many people have wondered, 'Why didn't they keep Phoenix and make him a superveteran, or maybe even Apollo's mentor?'" states Matsukawa. "And normally, we might have done that, since that's what he was turning into. But the team . . . well, they're a bit mischievous. They love to betray people's expectations, and this time is no different. More than betray, however, we wanted to present a whole new Phoenix."

Phoenix isn't the only familiar face. Fans of the original Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney may remember Ema Skye as the scientific-investigation-obsessed teenager from the game's bonus chapter, "From the Ashes." Now she's back as a detective on

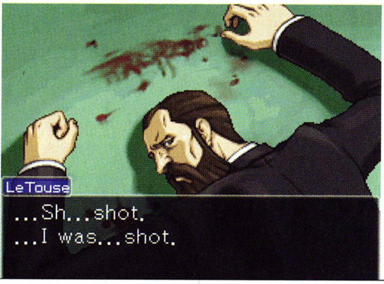




Klavier

Now, we rock!

BELOW: The Ace Attorney games are fairly lighthearted, but sometimes things get deadly serious. Good thing Apollo Justice is on the case to expose the culprit.



LeTouse

...Sh...shot.
...I was...shot.

Hit me with the guilty verdict, G! See if I care.

the police force.

"Interestingly enough, we had no idea what kind of role Ema would play at first," Matsukawa admits. "At the end of the bonus episode, Ema had flown off to Europe in hopes of becoming a forensic scientist, but then in [Apollo Justice], she suddenly turns up as a detective. I think we've made her grow up in a way that people will enjoy interacting with her in her role as the new series detective, who players will meet many times throughout the course of their investigations and who will be there to bail you out of trouble from time to time."

Plenty of new characters join the cast as well, including Apollo's mentor, expert defense attorney Kristoph Gavin, and Kristoph's brother, prosecutor Klavier Gavin. Klavier shows up with an axe to grind in more ways than one—in addition to his job as a prosecutor, he plays guitar in a platinum-album-selling rock band called the Gavinners.

"I like the rival prosecutor, Klavier Gavin, a lot," says Matsukawa. "I like how he is very different from every other prosecutor we've had in the series up to this point. Every prosecutor so far has been distant, or insulting and combative, or just downright scary, like Manfred von Karma, or his whip-wielding daughter Franziska. Klavier is unique in that he treats the courtroom like his own personal stage and is always performing something there on his side of the room. He's flashy and a real diva, and I think if he was a real public prosecutor, everyone would want to go to court just to watch him perform [laughs]."

Another major new character is Trucy Wright—apparently Phoenix's daughter. The exuberant 15-year-old is training to be a professional magician, but she also has time to work as Apollo's assistant. Much like Phoenix's former assistant Maya, Trucy provides Apollo both help and comic relief during trials with her skewed outlook on life.

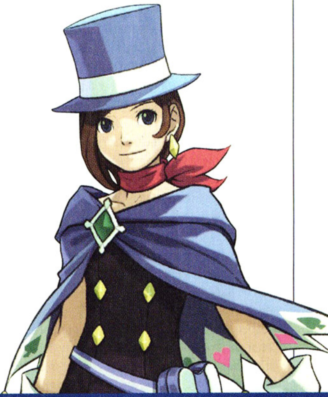
TAKING LEGAL ACTION

As in previous Ace Attorney games, presenting evidence to show contradictions (while optionally hollering "Objection!" into the microphone) is the key to success in court. But this time, that isn't always enough. With some help from Trucy, Apollo learns early in the game to use special powers of perception that can make or break a case.

That's too bad, because there was a witness.

"Apollo has an exceptionally strong power of perception," says Matsukawa. "So with this new character, we decided to introduce a new system—the Perceive System. . . . Apollo has a special bracelet which gives him the power to 'see through' even the thickest of lies to uncover the truth."

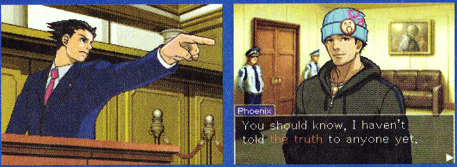
At certain points during witness testimony, Apollo's bracelet becomes active on the DS's lower screen, indicating that you can use his heightened



THEN AND NOW

Ah, what a difference seven years makes. Apollo will cross paths with several familiar Ace Attorney characters, now older and (hopefully) wiser than before.

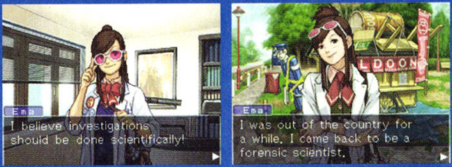
PHOENIX WRIGHT



You should know, I haven't told the truth to anyone yet.

Phoenix has traded in his signature blue suit for a grey hoodie. Without his spiky hair exposed, he's hard to recognize. He's also on the other side of the law—accused of murder.

EMA SKYE

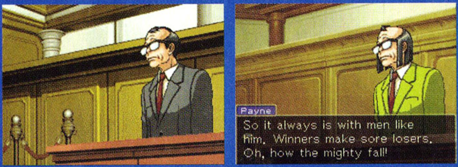


I believe investigations should be done scientifically!

I was out of the country for a while. I came back to be a forensic scientist.

Ema hasn't quite realized her dream of becoming a scientific investigator, but she is a detective. She won't maintain her slim physique for long if she doesn't stop munching on Snackoos-brand snack foods.

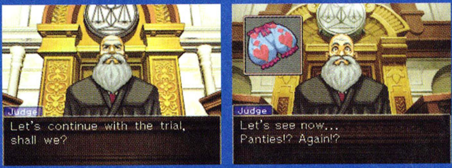
WINSTON PAYNE



So it always is with men like him. Winners make sore losers. Oh, how the mighty fall!

Hapless Winston Payne is still trying to make his mark as a prosecutor. Now in his 60s, Payne has really let himself go. Look at that hair . . . and that suit!

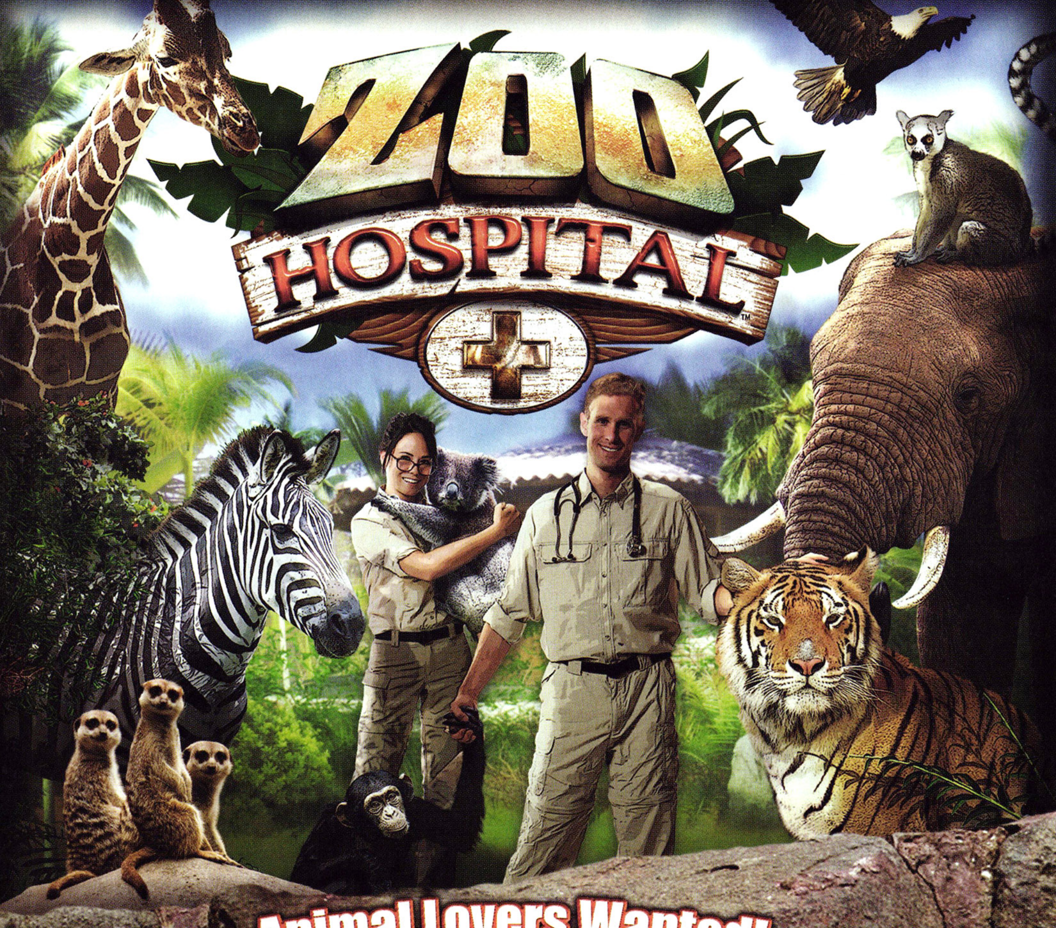
THE JUDGE



Let's continue with the trial, shall we?

Let's see now... Panties!? Again!?

Seven years later, the judge is still his semi-clueless, easily persuaded self. Apparently, some things never change.



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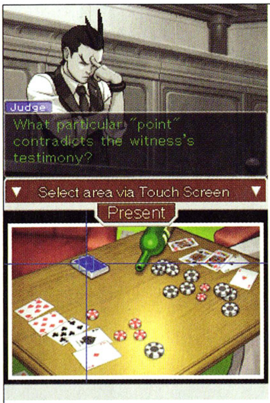
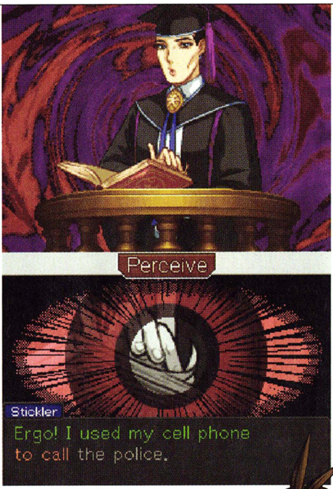


Judge

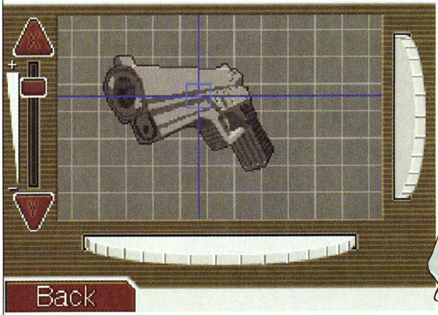
What particular "point" contradicts the witness's testimony?

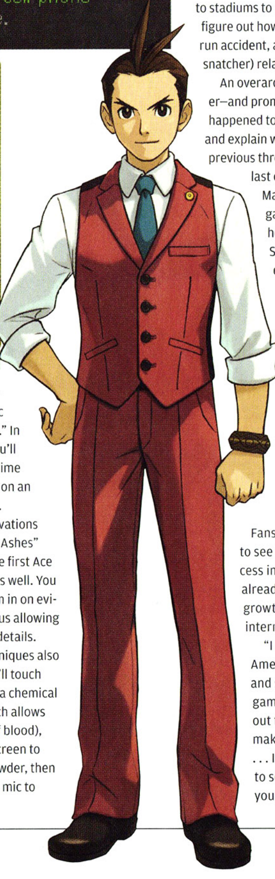


Stickler

Ergo! I used my cell phone to call the police.

Whether you're finding contradictions at crime scenes, perceiving witnesses' nervous habits, or examining evidence in 3-D, you'll put the DS's touch screen to good use.





perception abilities. When you tap the bracelet, time slows down and the screen zooms in on the witness, allowing you to closely watch the witness's behavior as he or she is speaking. If you pay attention, you'll notice subtle mannerisms—shifting eyes, twitching fingers, swallowing, etc.—during fishy parts of the testimony that reveal when something's awry. All that's left is to yell "Gotcha!" into the DS's microphone to blow the case wide open.

Even though the gameplay has been somewhat streamlined from previous Ace Attorney games—there are no more Psyche-Locks to break, and you can't present character profiles as evidence—there are many other activities that utilize the DS's functionality to keep things interesting.

"[By] taking advantage of the touch panel," Matsukawa explains, "we've implemented new ways to obtain information for you to use. For example, in the first episode, the player will be able to re-create the crime scene [in 3-D], which will allow players to solve the crime step-by-step along with the game in an interactive way, and perhaps further their understanding of the logic behind the mystery." In another chapter, you'll be able to solve a crime by adjusting sliders on an audio mixing board.

Many of the innovations from the "From the Ashes" bonus chapter in the first Ace Attorney are back as well. You can rotate and zoom in on evidence in full 3-D, thus allowing you to spot hidden details. Ema's forensic techniques also come into play. You'll touch the screen to spray a chemical called luminol (which allows you to find traces of blood), and you'll tap the screen to apply aluminum powder, then blow it away via the mic to find fingerprints or toeprints. You'll get to use new techniques, too, such as the ability to identify footprints—a multistep procedure that requires you to pour plaster into a footprint, dry the plaster, roll ink on the resulting mold, and compare it to the footprints of suspects.

"I think this deeper involvement makes the game more interesting and fun," comments Matsukawa. "Among the team members, they say that the DS is what has enabled them to bring the Ace Attorney games closer to what they had envisioned, so I hope people will enjoy the new features the DS allowed us to integrate into the game."

NO OBJECTIONS

While the story has always been one of the highlights of the Ace Attorney games, the cases are even more complex and intertwined in Apollo Justice. During the course of the game's five brain-twisting episodes, Apollo will encounter mob bosses, smugglers, and Interpol agents with secret identities; he'll visit locales ranging from hospitals to stadiums to painters' studios; he'll even have to figure out how a stolen noodle stand, a hit-and-run accident, and a panty-snatcher (yes, a panty-snatcher) relate to a mysterious homicide.

An overarching story ties the episodes together—and promises to solve the mystery of what happened to Phoenix Wright seven years ago and explain what he's been up to since. "In the previous three games, it was usually only the last case that really packed a wallop," Matsukawa confesses, "but in this game, as the player reaches the end, he or she will probably realize, 'Oh! So that's what that line in this other episode was talking about!' Because of that, I think this is one game that a lot of players will want to go back and play a second time . . . to see all the little things we tucked away into the story prior to the last case that will suddenly take on new meaning."

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney arrived in Japan this past April and sold more than a quarter-million copies within four days of its release, making it the most popular game in the series so far. Fans will have to wait until February to see if the game can have similar success in North America, but Matsukawa already attributes the franchise's growth to its ever-expanding group of international followers.

"I want to thank all the North American fans out there who loved and supported the first Ace Attorney game," she says. "To think that without them, we would've never started making Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney. . . . It's really like a dream come true to see the series do so well, so thank you, everyone."

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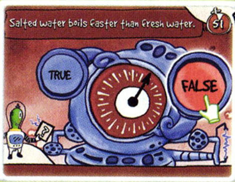
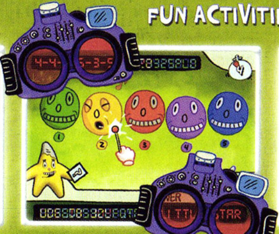

Salted water boils faster than fresh water.
51
TRUE
FALSE

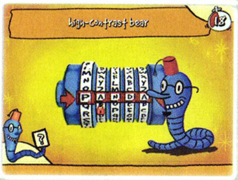
DATA HEAD

Race to solve true-false, multiple choice, and world trivia puzzles.



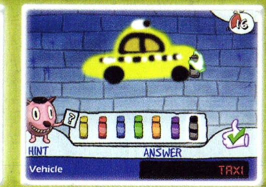
STAR PERFORMER

Act, play songs, and master the art of memorization.


high-contrast bear
18
PANDA

WORD WORM

Crack codes, build words, and remix phrases.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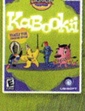

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Mega Man 20/20

Nintendo Power celebrates 20 years of Mega Man with 20 reasons why we love him and 20 questions with the games' Japanese producer. By Chris Hoffman

When Capcom released the first Mega Man game in December 1987, who would have guessed that the robotic blue hero would evolve into the juggernaut that he's become? Twenty years later, Mega Man has grown into one of the biggest names in gaming, starring in more than 50 games on over a dozen systems spanning numerous genres. Happy anniversary, Blue Bomber!

20 Questions with Mega Man's Producer

Although the person most closely associated with Mega Man is the character's creator, Keiji Inafune, the man responsible for Mega Man on a day-to-day basis is series producer Takeshi Horinouchi. Horinouchi began working on the franchise with Mega Man Battle Network 4, and has most recently overseen the production of the Mega Man Star Force and Mega Man ZX games on Nintendo DS. Although it seems like there's always a Mega Man project in development, Horinouchi took a break from his work to discuss Mega Man's 20th anniversary. What better excuse for a game of 20 Questions?

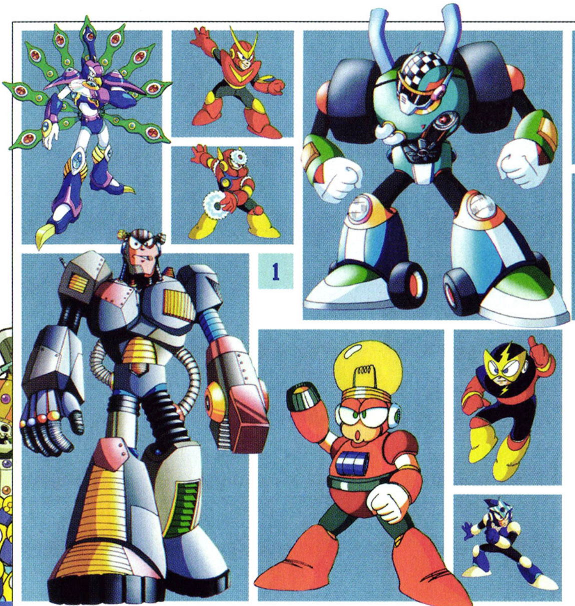
QUESTION #1

Why is Mega Man still going strong even 20 years later?

Takeshi Horinouchi: First, I think he has a cute, quirky character design, [plus] he is a responsive character that you don't get tired of playing, and I think that's why he has a lot of fans.

QUESTION #2

What do you consider to be Mega Man's great-



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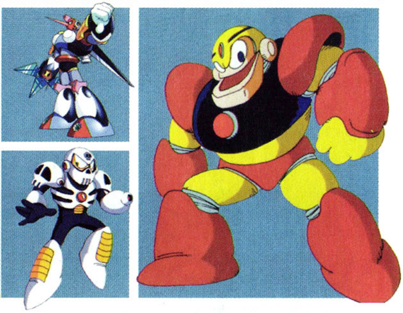
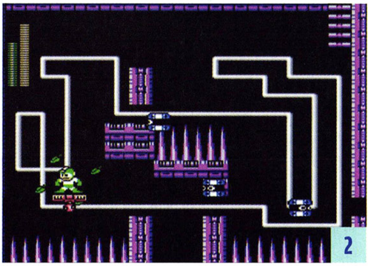




2

20 Reasons We Love Mega Man

Twenty years of Mega Man games have provided loads of reasons for players the world over to fall in love with the titular blue hero. Here—in no particular order—are 20 of them.

1 CRAZY BOSSES

Mega Man wouldn't be nearly as heroic without all those tough enemy bosses to fight. The robot masters and Mavericks took on nearly every form imaginable, inspired by animals, the elements, mythology, and much more. But we have to ask—just what the heck *is* a Gutsman?

2 TOUGH LOVE

No one will accuse Mega Man of being a pushover. The games are known for their incredible difficulty, but they're difficult in a way that makes you want to come back for more until you've mastered each challenge. Bring on the instant-death spikes and disappearing blocks!

est achievement?
TH: I think all the unique boss characters that were created for the game, and the fact that the player can use the bosses' weapons and then decide in which stage and on which boss those weapons would work best.

QUESTION #3
What is your first memory of Mega Man? How did you become a Mega Man fan?
TH: My first memory is a commercial for the very first Mega Man game. It really made an impression on me, and I borrowed the game from a friend who happened to own it. The first thing I remember thinking was, "This game is hard!" It took a long time, but I do have a memory of beating it [laughs].

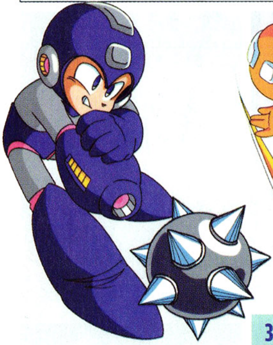
QUESTION #4
What's been the single most satisfying moment for you when working on the Mega Man series?
TH: Definitely when we do promotion events and I get to see the happy faces of kids who are really into playing Mega Man.

QUESTION #5
Who is your favorite boss enemy?
TH: He's not a boss per se, but out of all the characters I really like Bass. I think because he has all the appeal of a good antihero. Out of the regular bosses it would be Shadowman. Ninjas are pretty cool, don't you think? [laughs]

QUESTION #6
What's your favorite weapon you acquire from a boss enemy?
TH: That would have to be my favorite boss Shadowman's Shadow Blade!

QUESTION #7
Are there any particular stages that stand out as your favorites?
TH: Thinking back, I only have bitter memories of all the difficulty I had when playing any of the Mega Man games [laughs]. But if I had to narrow it down, I would say I really liked the weather-control system that was part of the stages in Mega Man Zero 4.

QUESTION #8
If you're playing Mega Man Battle Network, what would be your ultimate set of battle chips to bring into a fight? (I'll let you pick which Battle Network game.)
TH: This is another difficult question because I've seen so many different strategies used at the different competitions. But there is one combo I saw that stood out in my mind. It was a combo for Battle Network 5. It was JangoSP (Code D) then



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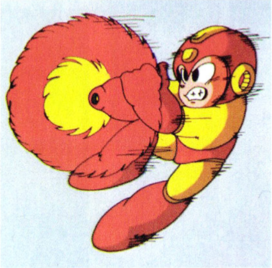

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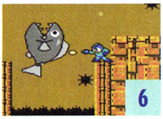

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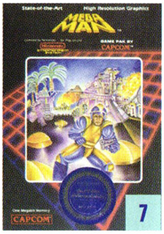

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3 A VAST ARSENAL

One of the main reasons for the original Mega Man's appeal is his ability to steal the weapons from defeated enemies. Blades, flamethrowers, shields, missiles, snakes (yes, snakes)—you name it, Mega Man could probably use it.

4 A ROCKIN' SOUNDTRACK

Mega Man's music—especially in the early days—is nothing short of amazing. Capcom got more out of the NES's sound chip than just about anyone, with multilayered tunes that stick in your head. Appropriately, Mega Man's Japanese name, Rockman, stems from rock 'n' roll.

5 MULTIMEDIA MOGUL

Games are just the beginning for Mega Man. He's had his own toy lines, comic books, card games, music CDs, and animated TV shows (including the recent *Mega Man NT Warrior*). He was even part of the N-Team on *Captain N: The Game Master*.

6 ANIMAL KINDNESS... SORTA

When Mega Man saves the world, he often does so with his animal friends at his side. Aside from his faithful dog, Rush, Mega Man has enlisted the aid of Tango the cat and Beat the bird. OK, so maybe Mega Man's also more or less destroyed the entire robotic animal kingdom, but who's counting *that*?

7 HILARIOUS BOX ART

Yeah, Mega Man delivers awesome gameplay, but he's also good for a laugh (even if it is unintentional). Case in point: the hideous geriatric, yellow Mega Man from the original game's American box art. Maybe Capcom should have used the Japanese art, but if they had, we wouldn't still be talking about it after 20 years.

P.A.PileDriver (Code D) then DeathPhoenix (Code D). The DeathPhoenix allowed the player to reuse the JangoSP and he dealt something like 1,400 points of damage, I believe.

QUESTION #9

Is there any Mega Man game you think is particularly underappreciated?

TH: I guess you could say Mega Man Legends. It was a new design for the series since it was an adventure-shooter. It would have been nice if it had done better sales-wise.

QUESTION #10

Which game is toughest as far as you're concerned?

TH: I think you could say all of the Mega Man games are relatively hard. Scratch that; they're definitely hard [laughs]. Personally speaking, I believe it was Mega Man Zero that first sent me running to a strategy guide. I remember not only relying on the strategy guide but thinking "Not again!" every time I died [laughs].

QUESTION #11

Which Mega Man game was most challenging for you to develop?

TH: Well, recently we've had a lot of issues with the Star Force series because, coming on the heels of the Battle Network series, the fans have a lot of expectations and things they want to see, and we're trying hard not to disappoint them. Of those issues, I can't even begin to tell you how many times we redid the design for Mega Man. I felt really bad for the designers [laughs].

QUESTION #12

Have you beat every single Mega Man game?

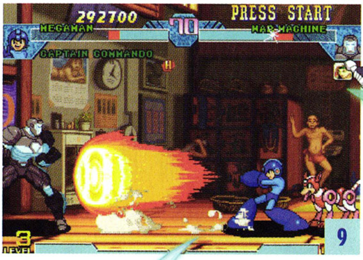
What do you say to the players that have?

TH: What *do* you say to players who have beaten every game? Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to beat them all. Since I'm involved with developing them now, I do try to beat those games even if it kills me [laughs]. But to all the players who have beaten every Mega Man game, all I can say is, "Well done!" [laughs] I hope they continue trying to beat the new Mega Man games as they come out.

QUESTION #13

What's the coolest/craziest thing you've seen a fan do to honor Mega Man?

TH: I've seen some major fans go as far as to make near-perfect costumes! At the Tokyo Game Show I was rather happy to see a cosplayer dressed as Zero (Mega Man X version)! I've also seen parents and their children doing cosplay for Battle Network and Star Force. But the most incredible thing has



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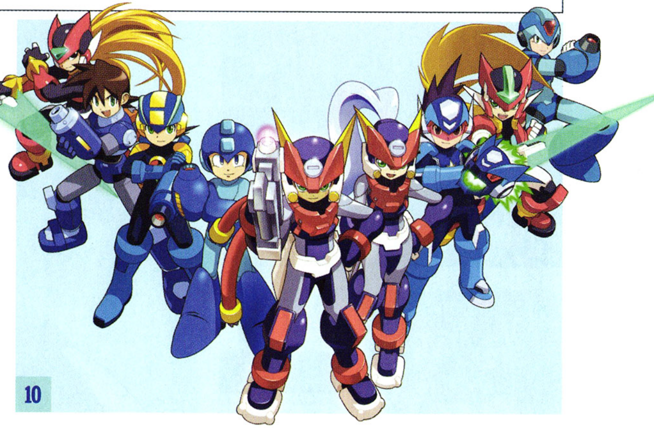

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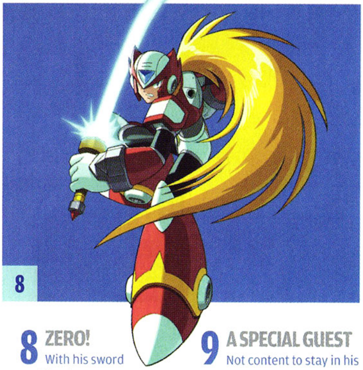

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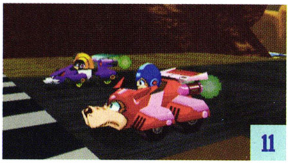

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12

8 ZERO!

With his sword and flowing ponytail, Zero (first introduced in the Mega Man X series) epitomizes cool in the Mega Man universe. After dying and coming back to life a few times, Zero went on to star in his own insanely difficult series, Mega Man Zero.

9 A SPECIAL GUEST

Not content to stay in his own games, Mega Man has made his way into numerous other titles. The blue hero has appeared in fighting games including Marvel vs. Capcom and Onimusha: Blade Warriors, action games such as Cannon Spike, and even in Konami's Boktai GBA series.

10 HE'S ALWAYS EVOLVING

Mega Man's not afraid to change with the times. The Mega Man franchise has branched off into seven distinct series, including the 3-D Mega Man Legends games and the RPG-style Mega Man Star Force titles. Each series offers something new.

11 WHEELED WARRIOR

Following in the tire tracks of many other gaming mascots, Mega Man earned his driver's license in Mega Man Battle & Chase. True to Mega Man form, the hero acquired car parts from defeated rivals. The game almost didn't make it to North America, but finally it arrived as part of Mega Man X Collection.

12 HE'S A GOOD SPORT

What does Mega Man do when he's not blasting robots? Apparently he plays soccer against them using teams of holographic clones, as evidenced by the SNES game Mega Man's Soccer. Mega Man put his footie skills to use in battle via the Megaball in Mega Man 8.

to be at a contest where entrants were using the Chips and Battle Cards in a way that exceeded the production team's imagination. When the players were done I ran over to them and told them what an awesome job they did [laughs].

QUESTION #14

Let's say I have a friend who has never played Mega Man. What game should I start him or her on for an introduction to the series?

TH: Hmm . . . now that's a difficult question. I think they're all great games, but I'd be happy if you could get them to play one of the recent series like Star Force or ZX. I think both series give you a real feel for what the Mega Man series as a whole is about.

QUESTION #15

There are so many Mega Man games—is he in danger of being overexposed? Could he use a vacation?

TH: I think he could use a vacation for sure, but the fans are always asking, "When's the next game coming out?" so he does tend to work overtime [laughs]. We don't want to make so many titles that players don't know which one to buy, so we're trying to be careful of that. But even if Mega Man goes on vacation, we don't want him taking too long of a break [laughs].

QUESTION #16

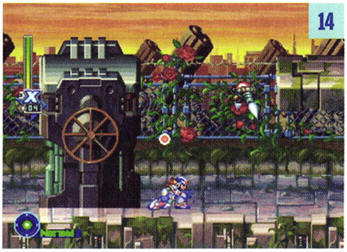
What are some ideas you had for Mega Man but ended up totally rejecting?

TH: In honor of Mega Man's 20th anniversary I had planned to do a game where all the iterations of Mega Man could battle each other, but then I gave up on it. There just wasn't enough manpower on the Capcom development team to bring the game to fruition. At some point in the future though, I'd still like to give it a shot.

QUESTION #17

Have you ever had any dreams about Mega Man?

TH: There were a few difficulties with the [*Mega Man NT Warrior*] movie, and during that time I had a dream that the Bass Cross Mega Man had cut me in half with one of his special attacks [laughs]. There was a time when I was discussing [Mega Man Star Force's] Wave Roads with the planner, and I guess we talked about it so much that I had a dream where I was an EM wave flying around the city. I was probably working too hard at the time, I think [laughs]. Where you go through periods where you're only thinking about the game, it's bound to show up in your dreams.



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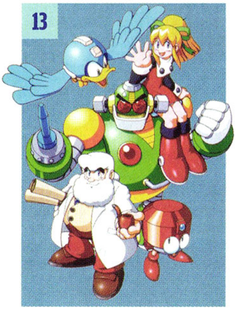

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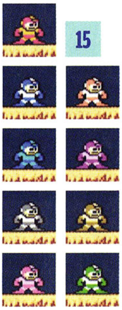

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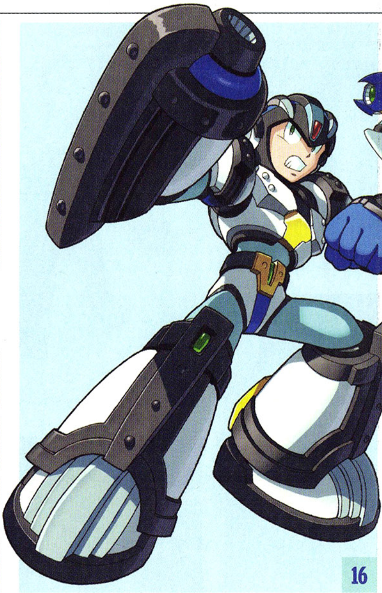

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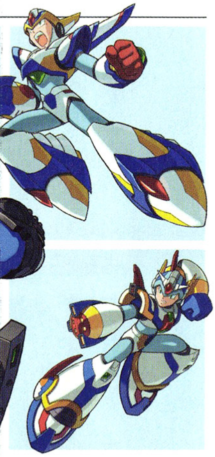
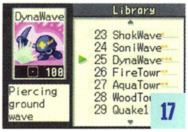




17

DynaWave

100

Piercing ground wave

Library

23 ShokWave

24 SoniWave

25 DynaWave

26 FireTowr

27 AquaTowr

28 WoodTo

29 Quake1

13 HE'S A FAMILY MAN

The original Mega Man wasn't alone in his endless battles against Dr. Wily's robots. His robotic sister Roll, his brother Protoman, and their fatherly creator Dr. Light were always there to lend a hand—and Mega Man was always there to protect them if need be.

14 DUCKING IS FOR WIMPS

Capcom proved that less is more by not giving Mega Man the ability to duck. It was an unusual omission, but one that added more challenge and fun to the game. Mega Man eventually learned to duck in the Mega Man X series, but the recent ZX games allow the heroes to duck only when they aren't powered up.

15 HIS WARDROBE

Many game characters get stuck in the same costume for an entire game. Not Mega Man. With each weapon he acquires, Mega Man's outfit changes into flashy new colors or designs representative of the power he's using. Details like this helped propel Mega Man to classic status.

16 UPGRADEABLE ABILITIES

One of the best additions to the Mega Man X series was the ability to enhance Mega Man with assorted equipment upgrades, which gave him strength he never knew he had. Other games continued the tradition with customizable power-up programs that let you make a Mega Man all your own.

17 COLLECT THEM ALL!

Hardcore fans tend to prefer the side-scrolling Mega Man games to the RPG gameplay of the Battle Network and Star Force games, but there's no question that collecting and trading battle chips gets pretty addictive. It adds a whole new aspect to the world of Mega Man.

QUESTION #18

What's the next Mega Man game on the horizon? More Star Force and ZX, or something else?

TH: This interview is coming out in January, right? [Close enough. —Ed.] Based on the timetable for the North American market, I would assume the next game you will get will be for the Star Force series. However, I'm sure you'd be happy if we got another game to you before that.

QUESTION #19

If you had whatever time and budget you wanted, what would you do with Mega Man next?

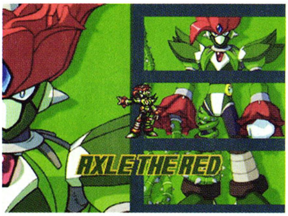
TH: That's difficult to answer because there's so much I want to do. I'd like to be able to add the network play option to the different Mega Man series. I think each player using a customized Mega Man he or she has a special affinity for would make for an exciting game. Of course, that would be one difficult game to design [laughs].

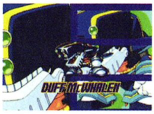
QUESTION #20

Where do you see Mega Man 20 years from now?

TH: I think now, as in the past, Mega Man has always been a true-to-life hero for children. No matter how game systems change or evolve, I think Mega Man will continue to fill children with dreams. And that means I've got to keep working hard [laughs].

I know it's true of me, but I think Mega Man has really come a long way with the players. And that's thanks to all the support they've given the series over the years, so I thank them for that. And as long as they support the series, it can only continue to grow, so I hope I can count on their continued support.





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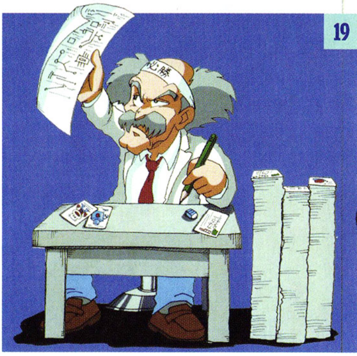

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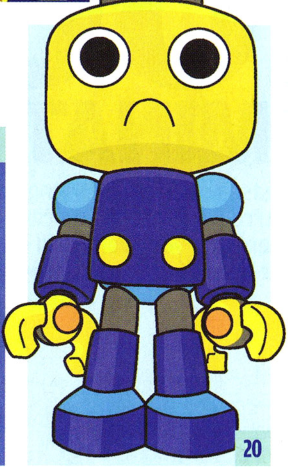


20

18 GUNS N' ROSES—WHAT?

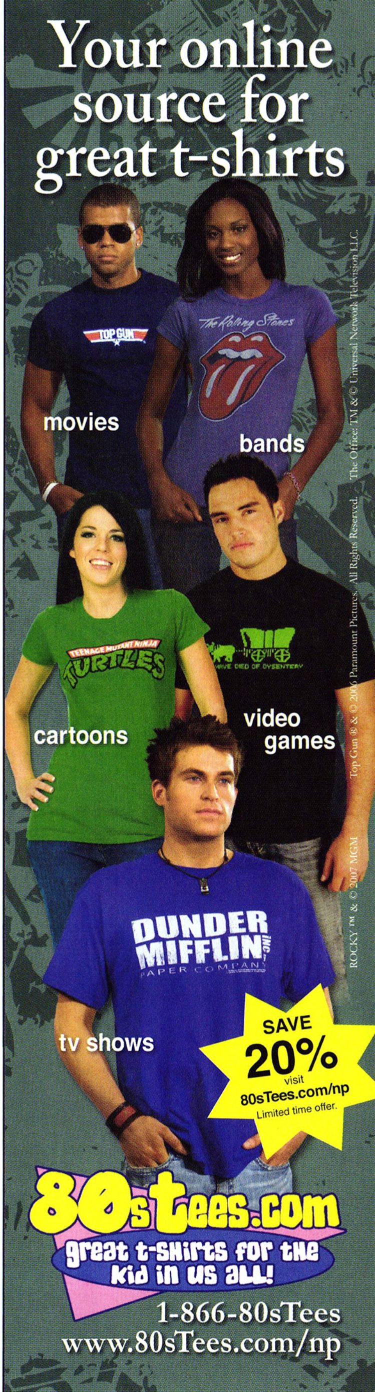
Love it or hate it, you've got to admit that it took some guts (or maybe just some seriously bad judgment) for Capcom to name all of the bosses in Mega Man X5 after members of the band Guns n' Roses. Seriously—Duff McWhalen? Very strange, but memorable.

19 ALIEN ASSAULT

Jaws dropped at the conclusion of Mega Man 2 when Dr. Wily, Mega Man's nemesis, revealed his true form and mutated into a flying, green space alien. Who would have guessed the mad scientist was an invader from beyond? It was, of course, a trick created by Dr. Wily's machines. Dr. Wily's as human as anybody. Or is he??

20 SERVBOTS

Who doesn't love the adorable Servbots? Introduced in the Mega Man Legends series, the diminutive Servbots were technically bad guys, but they're so cute and unassuming (and frequently abused by their master, Tron Bonne), you can't help but root for 'em.


TOP GUN
The Rolling Stones
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
HAVE DIED OF DYSENTERY
DUNDER MIFFLIN INC. PAPER COMPANY

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Nintendo Power Awards
2007
NOMINATIONS

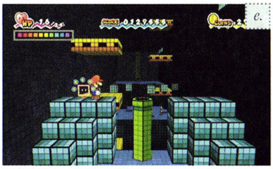
The top releases of 2007 are vying for your attention. Whether you're a fan of the favorites or you're rooting for the underdogs, your voice will be heard when you vote at **http://npawards.wordpress.com.**

By George Sinfield

Our reviewers give their opinions of the latest releases every month, so it's only fair that we let you weigh in with the final say once a year. The first full calendar year of Wii titles has helped define what body-moving control brings to the mix. DS games, too, continue to innovate with everything from the touch-driven adventure of The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass to the throw-your-stylus-to-the-side action of Contra 4. We've debated over every release, and have narrowed down the choices to a manageable 6 per category (12 for Game of the Year—Overall). It's up to you to push your picks to the top of the heap.

🟦 **Wii Games** 🟧 **DS Games**

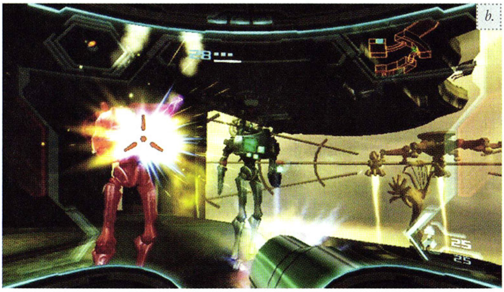
a.
11
Javelin
15
Hand Axe



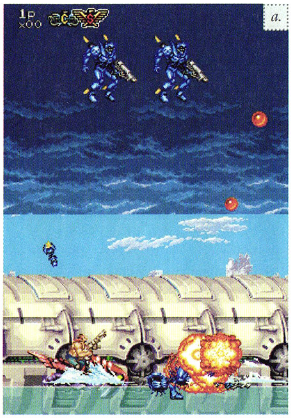
Game of the Year Wii

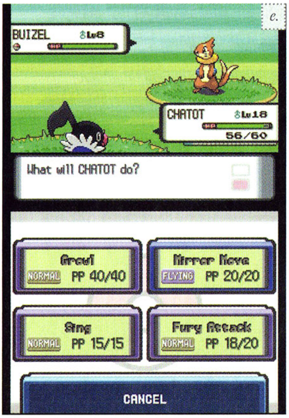
It's easy to be starstruck in the race for top Wii title. Samus Aran and Mario both raised the bar sky-high in perfectly executed space adventures. Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn and Super Paper Mario shine just as brightly as their better-known competitors, and NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams and Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure earned their nominations with spot-on gameplay and dazzling graphics.

a. **Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
b. **Metroid Prime 3: Corruption**
c. **NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams**
d. **Super Mario Galaxy**
e. **Super Paper Mario**
f. **Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure**



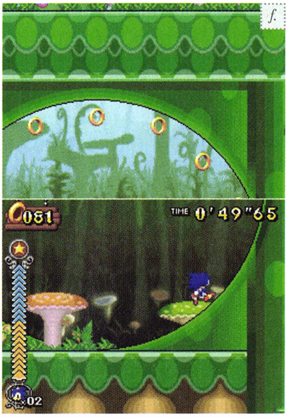
f.
A : Check
B : Camera




e.
BUIZEL Lv8
CHATOT Lv18
56/60

What will CHATOT do?

Growl
NORMAL PP 40/40
Mirror Move
FLYING PP 20/20
Sing
NORMAL PP 15/15
Fury Attack
NORMAL PP 18/20
CANCEL


f.
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TIME 0'49"65
02

Game of the Year DS

Voters often stop and click as soon as they see The Legend of Zelda. We're not saying that Phantom Hourglass is anything but a great choice, but you might want to ponder the cerebral rewards of Hotel Dusk: Room 215 and Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All, let your palms sweat just thinking about Sonic Rush Adventure or Contra 4, or celebrate the innovations of Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl for a moment (then vote for The Legend of Zelda).

a. **Contra 4**

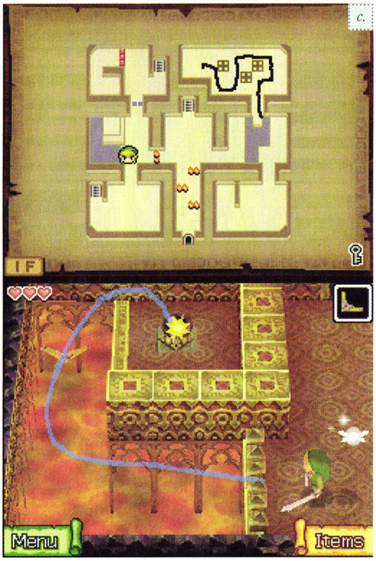
b. **Hotel Dusk: Room 215**

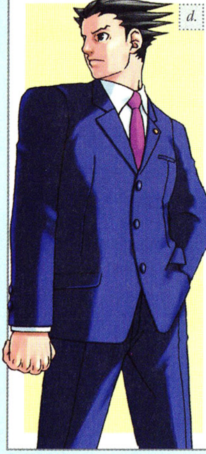
c. **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**

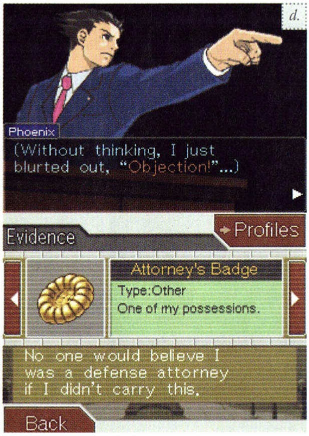
d. **Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All**

e. **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl**

f. **Sonic Rush Adventure**


c.
1F
Menu
Items




d.
Phoenix

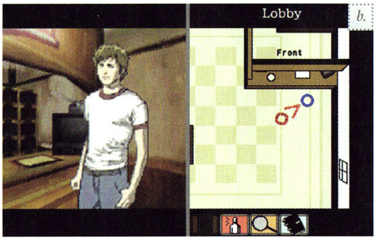
(Without thinking, I just blurted out, "Objection!"...)

Evidence
Profiles
Attorney's Badge

Type:Other
One of my possessions.

No one would believe I was a defense attorney if I didn't carry this.

Back


b.
Lobby
Front

Best Wii GRAPHICS

Tight control and a compelling concept go a long way toward immersing you in a game world, but you know a title has the whole package when it looks great too. Metroid Prime 3: Corruption helps you really understand Samus Aran's dark side with its great attention to detail and spellbinding lighting effects. Guilty Gear XX Accent Core hits you hard with anime-quality animation, and the remaining games take you to new places in style.

a. **Guilty Gear XX Accent Core**

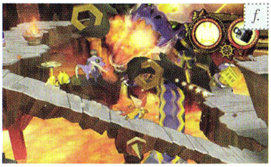
b. **Metroid Prime 3: Corruption**

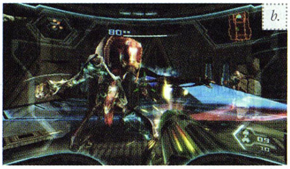
c. **NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams**

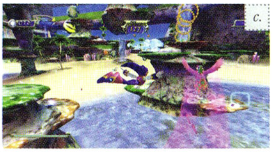
d. **Super Mario Galaxy**

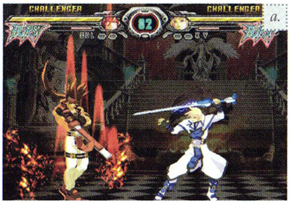
e. **Super Paper Mario**

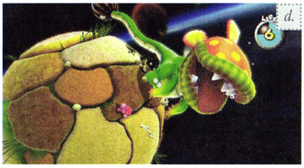
f. **Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure**

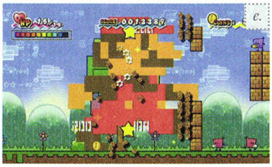


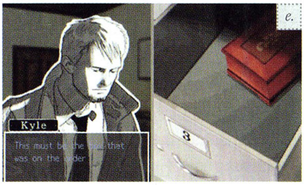


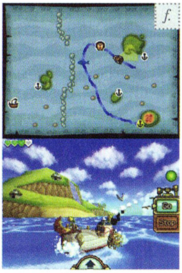


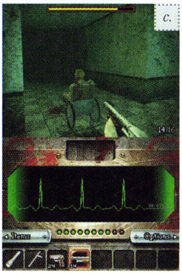

a.
CHALLENGER
82
CHALLENGER

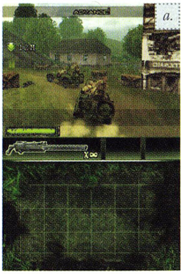









c.
Items
Options



Best DS GRAPHICS

The competition is fierce for graphics on the DS. Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings and Contra 4 are flashy titles that would look good on any game system. Dementium: The Ward and Brothers in Arms DS push the handheld to its limits by presenting full 3-D worlds. The graphics of The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass allow for a higher level of interactivity than those of most games. And Hotel Dusk: Room 215's graphics look booklike, in keeping with the game's sideways screen configuration.

a. **Brothers in Arms DS**

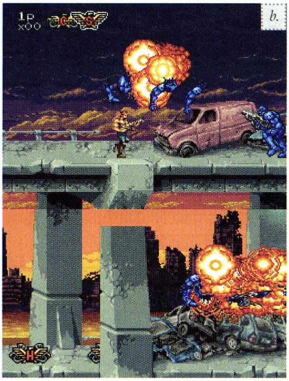
b. **Contra 4**

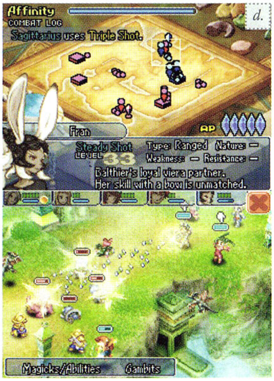
c. **Dementium: The Ward**

d. **Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings**

e. **Hotel Dusk: Room 215**

f. **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**




d.
Affinity
COMBAT LOG
Sagittarius uses Triple Shot.
Fran
AP
Steady Shot
LEVEL 33
Type: Ranged
Nature: –
Weakness: –
Resistance: –
Balthier's loyal viera partner.
Her skill with a bow is unmatched.
Magicks/Abilities
Gambits

Best MUSIC

Big-time RPGs and adventure games benefit from a soundtrack that you can sink your teeth into. The Final Fantasy titles have a reputation for storytelling, partially because their sweeping orchestral music helps pull all of the elements together in dramatic fashion. Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn and Luminous Arc follow suit. The other games in the category use their music to set the pace for rigorous action; it's not easy to do, but it pays off when everything clicks.

a. **Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings**
b. **Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
c. **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**
d. **Luminous Arc**
e. **NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams**
f. **Super Mario Galaxy**

Best SOUND/VOICE ACTING

Oscar-caliber actors stepped up to the microphone for The Godfather: Blackhand Edition (Robert Duvall, James Caan) and The Legend of Spyro: The Eternal Night (Elijah Wood, Gary Oldman). Cast members from the original properties give voices to the characters in The Simpsons Game and Transformers: The Game. Though Samus Aran is still silent, Metroid Prime 3: Corruption got the nod because it brings full-on voice acting to the series. And those Rabbids? They just talk funny.

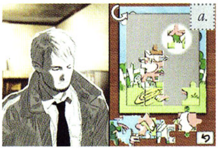
a. **The Godfather: Blackhand Edition**
b. **The Legend of Spyro: The Eternal Night**
c. **Metroid Prime 3: Corruption**
d. **Rayman Raving Rabbids 2**
e. **The Simpsons Game**
f. **Transformers: The Game**

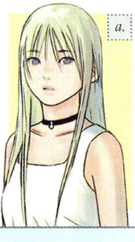
Best ADVENTURE GAME

Adventure may be the most difficult category to nail down because it blends action with the puzzles and choices that you'd expect from an RPG. The Legend of Zelda titles are the model for the adventure game, probably making Phantom Hourglass the one to beat. If you've already voted for Link's latest as game of the year for the DS, you might want to give props to one of the other story-oriented gems on the list.

a. **Hotel Dusk: Room 215**
b. **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**
c. **Lunar Knights**
d. **Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All**
e. **Super Paper Mario**
f. **Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure**

f.
Ⓐ: Check
Ⓑ: Camera





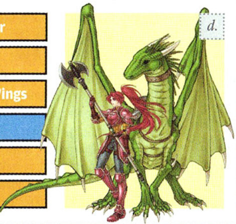
c.
LIFE
ENE
TRC

a.
Grku attacks!
Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!
HP: 110 MP: 173
HP: 909 MP: 43
HP: 780 MP: 650

Best RPG/ STRATEGY GAME

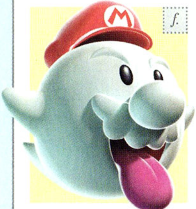
There was a time when RPGs were considered fringe titles for the North American audience. The Dragon Quest (then known as Dragon Warrior) and Final Fantasy titles made inroads into the mainstream, but not until Pokémon hit did the genre really reach a mass audience on our shores. All three of those franchises are still going strong. Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn also carries on a longstanding series, and Luminous Arc starts a new one that has old-school style.

a. **Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker**
b. **Final Fantasy VI Advance**
c. **Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings**
d. **Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
e. **Luminous Arc**
f. **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl**

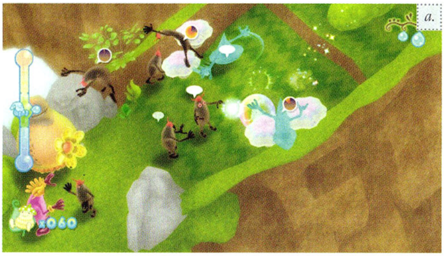

d.

Best PLATFORMER

Super Mario Galaxy has gone where no platformer has gone before—spherical—and our reviewers have responded with a unanimous "Wow." If you feel like you've already given the game its due, though, you can reward the clever play mechanics of Dewy's Adventure or DK Jungle Climber, the create-your-own-character inventiveness of Drawn to Life, or one of two superfast Sonic titles: Secret Rings on Wii, Rush Adventure on DS.


f.

a. **Dewy's Adventure**
b. **DK Jungle Climber**
c. **Drawn to Life**
d. **Sonic and the Secret Rings**
e. **Sonic Rush Adventure**
f. **Super Mario Galaxy**


a.

e.

f.
Rebecca
10006
Shotgun

Best SHOOTER/ ACTION GAME

Though big guns Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles and Metroid Prime 3: Corruption will likely dominate the action category, none of the nominees would back down from a fight. The list wouldn't be complete without an entry from developer Treasure, and Bleach: The Blade of Fate has shown that the company is at the top of its game. Contra 4 fits the bill with its explosive action and high difficulty level.

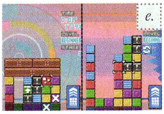
a. **Bleach: The Blade of Fate**
b. **Contra 4**
c. **Mega Man ZX Avent**
d. **Metroid Prime 3: Corruption**
e. **NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams**
f. **Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles**

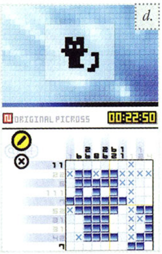
d.

Best PUZZLE GAME

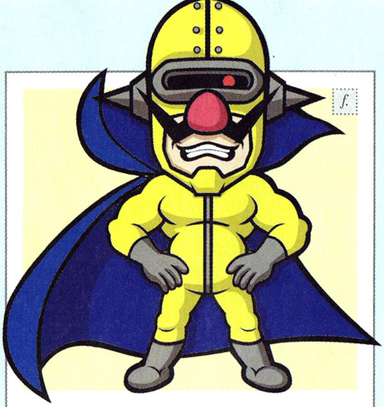
If this is the era of casual gaming, the Puzzle category should be very competitive. The highly rated Planet Puzzle League and Meteos: Disney Magic are new entries in fan-pleasing series. Picross DS uses the DS's touch sensitivity to improve a title that did not make big waves on Game Boy years ago. The ambitious Puzzle Quest adds an element of adventure. Nervous Brickdown incorporates action into its puzzles, as does the lone Wii entry, Kororinpa: Marble Mania.

a. **Kororinpa: Marble Mania**
b. **Meteos: Disney Magic**
c. **Nervous Brickdown**
d. **Picross DS**
e. **Planet Puzzle League**
f. **Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords**





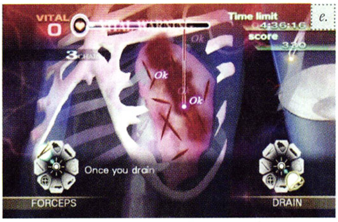
SCORE
3610
b.



Best ALTERNATIVE GAME

The Wii debuts of a couple established rhythm games have brought something new to their respective series. Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party incorporates hand gestures and Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock has gone cordless with the Wii remote. WarioWare: Smooth Moves is motion-controlled perfection (and the funniest game to watch someone else play). Cooking Mama: Cook Off and Trauma Center: New Blood give us unusual video game professions, and Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck is just plain daffy.

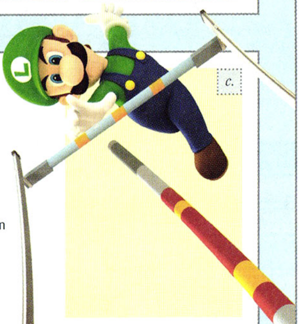
a. **Cooking Mama: Cook Off**
b. **Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party**
c. **Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock**
d. **Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck**
e. **Trauma Center: New Blood**
f. **WarioWare: Smooth Moves**

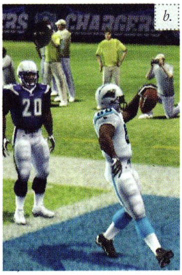


Best SPORTS/ RACING GAME

The hyper-realistic FIFA 08 and the just plain wacky Mario Strikers Charged represent the sport that the rest of the world knows as football, while the fate of stateside football rests in the always-capable hands of the Madden NFL series. Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games and SSX Blur offer new advances in motion control, and the second iteration of the Tiger Woods PGA Tour series worked out a few minor kinks in its swing.

a. **FIFA 08**
b. **Madden NFL 08**
c. **Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games**
d. **Mario Strikers Charged**
e. **SSX Blur**
f. **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08**

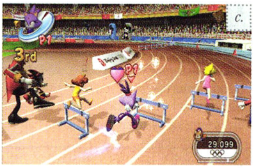


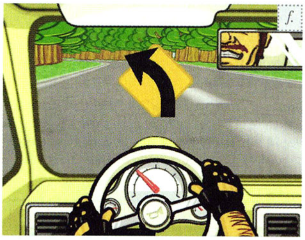


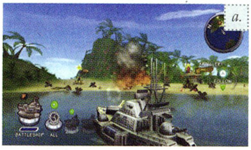
Best MULTIPLAYER

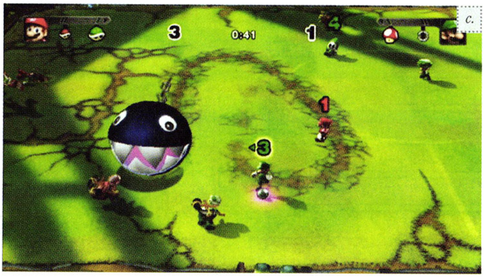
Your vote is going to depend on what type of multiplayer configuration you like. Of the two co-op titles on the list, one is destructive (Contra 4) and the other one is productive (Trauma Center: New Blood). Phantom Hourglass builds on previous Zelda multiplayer scenarios. Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games is the lone sports title, while Rayman Raving Rabbids 2 (simultaneous play) and WarioWare: Smooth Moves (largely alternating play) are great party games.

a. **Contra 4**
b. **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**
c. **Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games**
d. **Rayman Raving Rabbids 2**
e. **Trauma Center: New Blood**
f. **WarioWare: Smooth Moves**









Best Wi-Fi MULTI-PLAYER

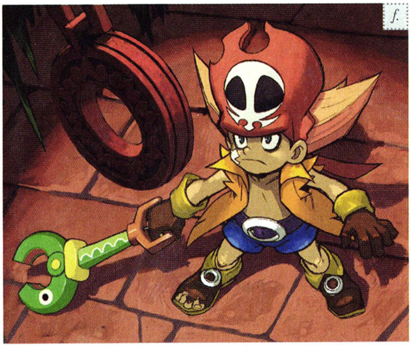
You've got to consider Madden NFL as the favorite on any list that it graces. But before you click, consider the versatility of Battalion Wars 2's online options (versus and co-op modes), the 32-player sessions in Medal of Honor: Heroes 2, and the sheer energy of Mario Strikers Charged. Planet Puzzle League incorporates chatting in its one-on-one matches, and the Pokémon titles create a new community for Pokémon fans.

a. **Battalion Wars 2**
b. **Madden NFL 08**
c. **Mario Strikers Charged**
d. **Medal of Honor: Heroes 2**
e. **Planet Puzzle League**
f. **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl**

Best NEW CHARACTER

Louie Denonno is the most complicated character among our nominees (you can't really trust anyone in Hotel Dusk), while Count Bleck and Captain Linebeck may be the most entertaining. If you always root for the hero, you can't go wrong with the valiant Micaiah or zany Zack. Watch your back if you don't vote for Franziska von Karma—she's got a mean whip and isn't afraid to use it.

- *a.* **Captain Linebeck—The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**
- *b.* **Count Bleck—Super Paper Mario**
- *c.* **Franziska von Karma—Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice For All**
- *d.* **Louie Denonno—Hotel Dusk: Room 215**
- *e.* **Micaiah—Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
- *f.* **Zack—Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure**



Tomaj
This is the chance of a lifetime!
A whole sky continent just waiting to be explored.

Andre
You'll never get past...
these MANLY BICEPS!

e.
Berry Big Circus
Berry Big Circ

Trilo
You want to talk about what we saw, right?

Best STORY/WRITING

The last year has seen some of the best video game writing ever. Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All and Super Paper Mario weave humor into their stories, while Hotel Dusk: Room 215 does a great job of channeling Raymond Chandler. If pure drama gets you worked up, it'll be a three-way race between Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings, Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn, and Luminous Arc.

- *a.* **Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings**
- *b.* **Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
- *c.* **Hotel Dusk: Room 215**
- *d.* **Luminous Arc**
- *e.* **Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All**
- *f.* **Super Paper Mario**

Game of the Year OVERALL

It all comes down to this. You can vote for your favorite between your picks for DS game of the year and Wii game of the year, or spread the love to a third choice. Maybe your votes in other categories have made you realize that you haven't given one title enough love. Here's your chance to set the record straight.

- *a.* **Contra 4**
- *b.* **Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn**
- *c.* **Hotel Dusk: Room 215**
- *d.* **Metroid Prime 3: Corruption**
- *e.* **NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams**
- *f.* **Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All**
- *g.* **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl**
- *h.* **Sonic Rush Adventure**
- *i.* **Super Mario Galaxy**
- *j.* **Super Paper Mario**
- *k.* **The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**
- *l.* **Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure**

ATTENTION GEARHEADS!

$2000 in Monthly Prizes!

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JULY/AUGUST 1988:

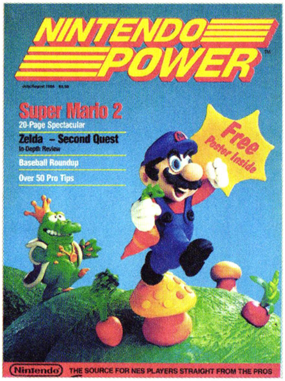
The Debut of Super Mario Bros. 2

VOLUME 1 • JULY/AUGUST 1988 • PAGES 6-25

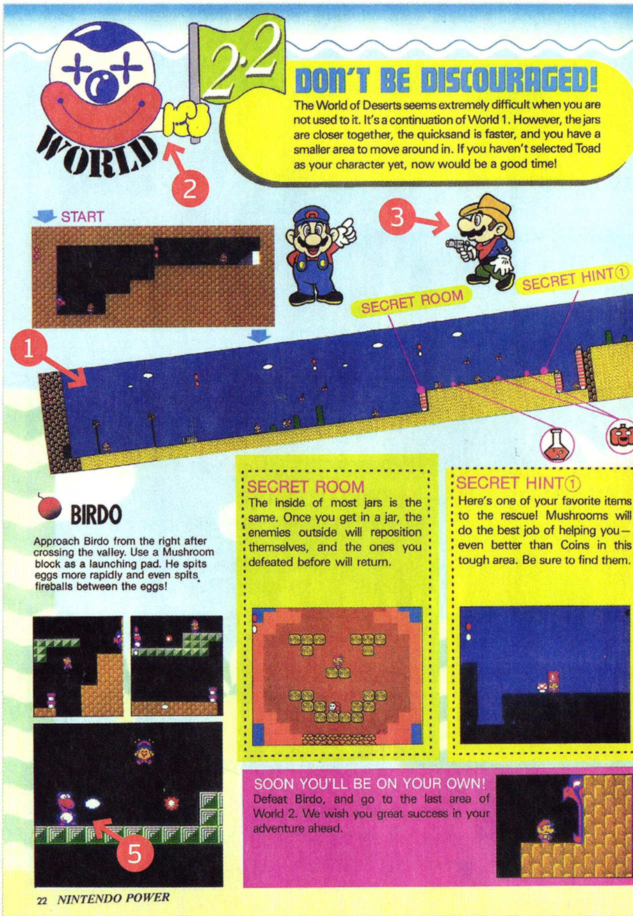
In this new section, we take a look back at classic gaming moments through the pages of Nintendo Power. It's a part of our year-long 20th birthday bash, and will run in every issue this year.

To kick things off, we chose the cover story from the very first issue—the debut of Super Mario Bros. 2! The map-heavy page designs are vintage Nintendo Power, back when the magazine was known for its jam-packed strategy articles. Anybody else out there remember studying these tips between classes?

By Chris Slate


NINTENDO POWER
Super Mario 2
20-Page Spectacular
Zelda – Second Quest
In-Depth Review
Baseball Roundup
Over 50 Pro Tips
Free Poster Inside
Nintendo
THE SOURCE FOR NES PLAYERS STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

Youngsters, feast your eyes on the very first issue of Nintendo Power. Twenty full pages of Super Mario Bros. 2 goodness...maps for the second quest in Zelda...and over 50 pro tips! And—wow—claymation Mario. You can practically *smell* the nostalgia through the page!


WORLD
2-2
START
SECRET ROOM
SECRET HINT①
1
2
3
5

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED!

The World of Deserts seems extremely difficult when you are not used to it. It's a continuation of World 1. However, the jars are closer together, the quicksand is faster, and you have a smaller area to move around in. If you haven't selected Toad as your character yet, now would be a good time!

BIRDO

Approach Birdo from the right after crossing the valley. Use a Mushroom block as a launching pad. He spits eggs more rapidly and even spits fireballs between the eggs!

SECRET ROOM

The inside of most jars is the same. Once you get in a jar, the enemies outside will reposition themselves, and the ones you defeated before will return.

SECRET HINT①

Here's one of your favorite items to the rescue! Mushrooms will do the best job of helping you—even better than Coins in this tough area. Be sure to find them.

SOON YOU'LL BE ON YOUR OWN!

Defeat Birdo, and go to the last area of World 2. We wish you great success in your adventure ahead.

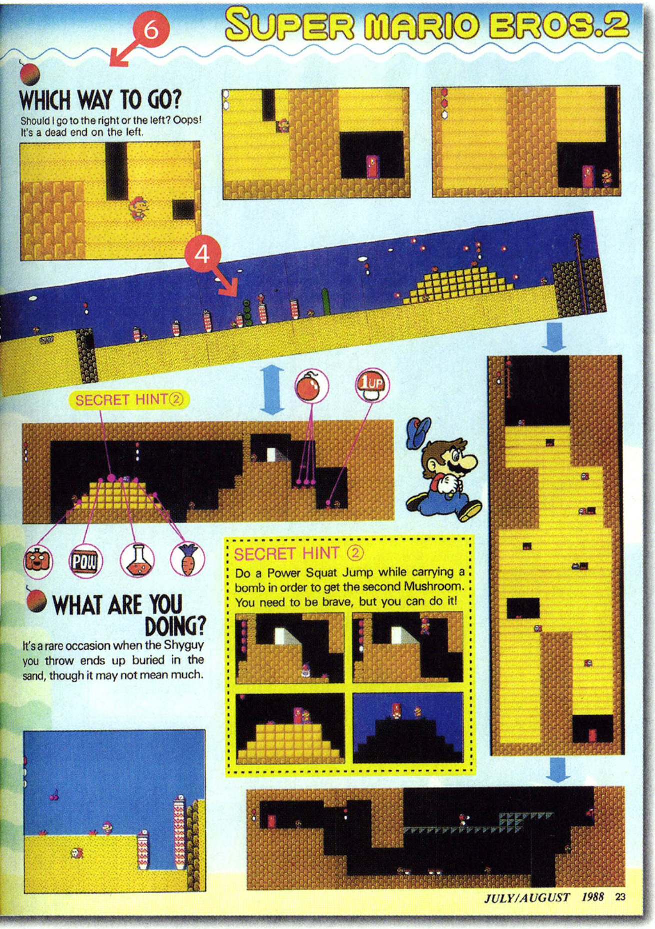
22 *NINTENDO POWER*

1 I still get a kick out of these old-school maps of 2-D games. The original team at Nintendo Power were masters at making these, and detailing them with every hidden item and power-up. Models of 3-D levels just can't compare.

2 Maybe my memory isn't as good as it used to be, but...does anyone remember Super Mario Bros. 2 having anything to do with creepy clowns?

OF NINTENDO POWER

#1 IN A YEARLONG SERIES OF CLASSIC NINTENDO POWER MOMENTS



SUPER MARIO BROS.2

WHICH WAY TO GO?

Should I go to the right or the left? Oops! It's a dead end on the left.

SECRET HINT②

SECRET HINT ②

Do a Power Squat Jump while carrying a bomb in order to get the second Mushroom. You need to be brave, but you can do it!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

It's a rare occasion when the Shyguy you throw ends up buried in the sand, though it may not mean much.

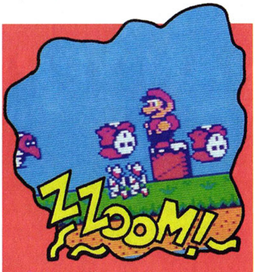
JULY/AUGUST 1988 23

3 Now, I *know* I would've remembered a pistol-packing cowboy Mario. And what's with all of the other Marios on this page having blue hats? Maybe the ink on the page is discoloring with age... yeah, that's it.

4 Super Mario Bros. 2 introduced many new characters that went on to become series regulars, like Pokey here, and Shyguys. This is interesting because the original Japanese version of the game didn't have Mario characters in it and was titled Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic.

5 Birdo has *got* to be one of the strangest video game characters of all time. Birdo is said to be male, even though he lays eggs—check that, *spits* eggs—is colored pink with thick eyelashes, and in later games, wears a big red bow on his head.

6 In the early issues of Nintendo Power—and up until the magazine's redesign two and a half years ago—every feature article had its own from-scratch design. The layouts and text fonts were chosen to match the look and feel of each game, so every story looked very different.



ZZOOM! BAMF!

Early issues of Nintendo Power featured some wild screen shot treatments, much like the Japanese game magazines of the time. Oddly shaped picture frames—complete with comic-book sound effects—brought pages to life by adding a little extra spice. Hey, we should bring these back!

ZZOOM!
BAMF!
SNAP!
THUP!
BADOOM!

SUPER MARIO BROS.2

DEFEAT YOUR ENEMIES

EARTH SHAKES

EXPLODE!

LIFT ENEMIES

VEGETABLE

SLIDE AND HIT!

NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
January 2008

WIN THE WAR!

ADVANCE WARS: DAYS OF RUIN

EVERYONE 10+
Language
Mild Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GRAND PRIZE:

5 WINNERS!!!!!

Do you have the moxie to lead a ragtag, post-apocalyptic army to victory? Five lucky commanders will be issued one Nintendo DS (choice of Polar White or Onyx) and one copy of Advance Wars: Days of Ruin; the rest is up to them.

SECOND PRIZE:

20 WINNERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

There's nothing second rank about winning one of 20 copies of Advance Wars: Days of Ruin for Nintendo DS. Prove that you're among the elite commanders.

TO ENTER: **Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:**

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v224
c/o Future US
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than February 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about, February 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 4000 Shoreline Court, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Future US, Inc. cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for five (5) contestants is a Nintendo DS (choice of Polar White or Onyx version, of which the MSRP value is $129.99), and one retail copy of the Advance Wars: Days of Ruin® Nintendo DS software (of which the actual retail value is $34.99). The prize that is available for twenty (20) contestants is a retail copy of the Advance Wars: Days of Ruin® Nintendo DS software (of which the actual retail value for each is $34.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

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4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

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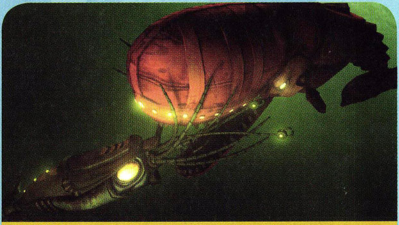

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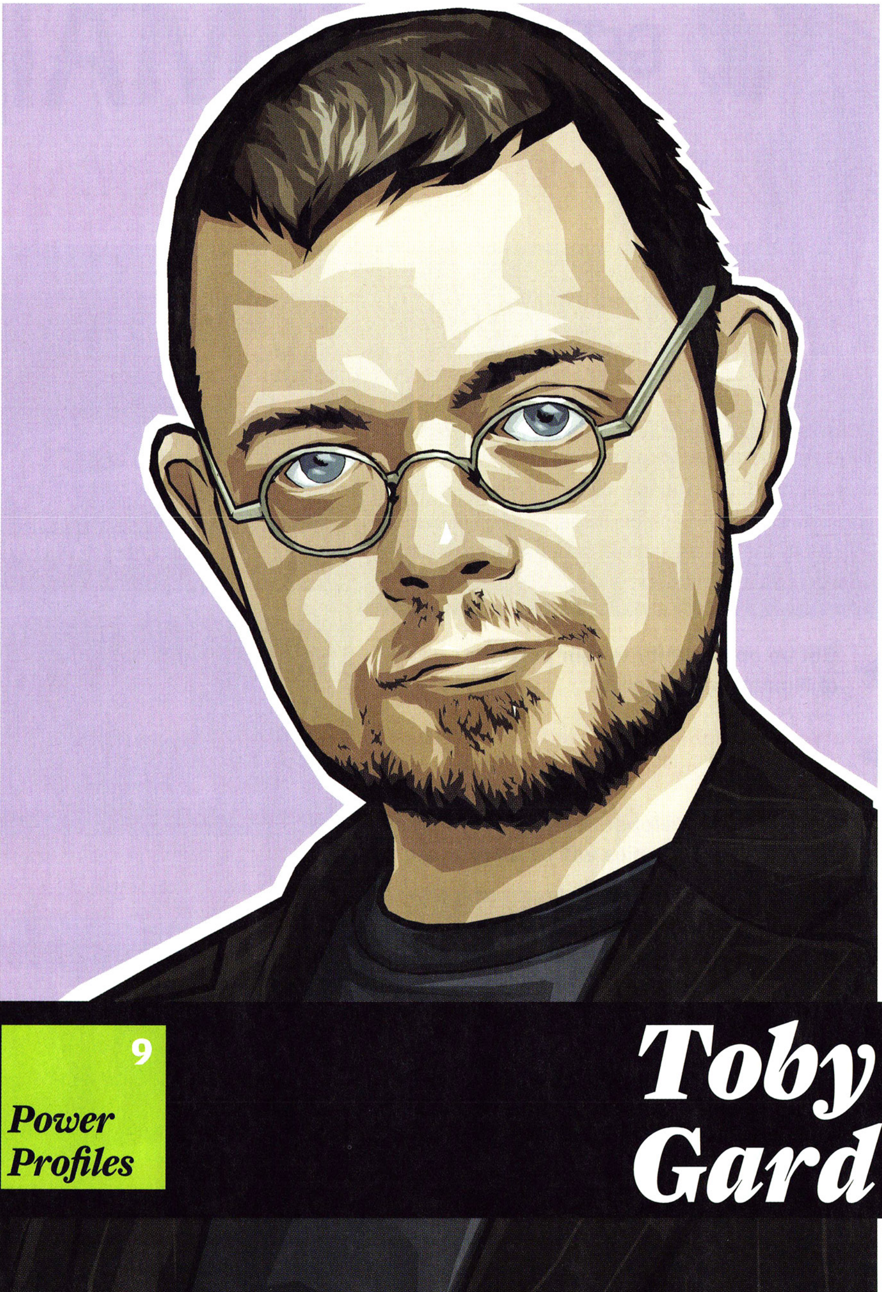


9

Power Profiles

Toby Gard

Nearly everyone with even a passing interest in video games knows the name Lara Croft. The tomb raiding English heiress is the medium's most recognizable female protagonist, and her games have sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. Toby Gard was the character's original creator and the game designer on the franchise's groundbreaking first installment.

At a time when nearly every video game protagonist was either a muscle-bound alpha male or a talking critter, the refined Ms. Croft broadened our perception of what games could be. The original Tomb Raider also stands as an important achievement in the early days of 3-D game design. But despite his work's critical and commercial success, Gard left developer Core Design shortly after the completion of the first game to start his own studio, Confounding Factor. Though Tomb Raider continued to enjoy strong sales and even spawned a pair of motion pictures starring Angelina Jolie, the quality of Lara's adventures hit a steady decline. Happily for series fans, Gard recently reunited with Lara and helped gaming's first lady get back on track with two of her best expeditions in years—Tomb Raider: Legend and Tomb Raider: Anniversary.

date of birth:
June 8, 1972

birthplace:
Essex, Great Britain

position:
Game designer

best known for:
Creating Lara Croft, the first female video game icon; designing the original Tomb Raider

favorite food:
Cheese on toast

current projects:
Tomb Raider

Nintendo Power: Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?

TG: Ultima Underworld. I played that game and decided then and there that I had to make games. I had a love of animation and worked for a whole year creating all sorts of animations on my Amiga. Indiana Jones line tests, entire game intros, all sorts of stuff. Eventually I sent that off to Core Design and Psygnosis, who were the only two developers I thought were making cool games in the UK at the time. Core hired me, and a year later I was pitching Tomb Raider to them.

NP: When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

TG: I was always in a world of imagination as a kid. When I learned to express those worlds through writing, drawing, and eventually animation, they always came up somewhat short for me; too static. Video games held the promise of creating those worlds for other people to explore actively, just as I did in my imagination. That seemed so amazing to me that I had to get into games.

NP: How has the video game industry changed since you've been involved with it?

TG: There's no more Lone Ranger. There was a time when one person could create a game that was purely their personal vision. That can't happen any more with teams of 100 people. Now you need leaders, not lone wolves, which is a very big change in the industry. It's as if we went from one guy painting on canvas to massive crews making Hollywood blockbusters in the course of 10 years. That's one massive upheaval.

One day I think things will return to the situation where one person can do it all. When the industry stops reinventing the wheel every game cycle and the focus moves away from creating hard-coded mechanics to more-generic systems, perhaps games will become more of a medium for the everyman.

NP: What aspect of creating a game do you enjoy most?

TG: People enjoying playing them. That is what motivates me to work; wanting to give people a good time.

NP: Can you talk a little bit about the creation of the Lara Croft character? What were some of the team's sources of inspiration, and were there preliminary iterations of the character that differed drastically from the Lara we know today?

TG: It was largely reactionary. The overwhelming message we were getting at Core was that all games had to have a square-jawed blonde-haired American lead or it would never sell in America (where all the money was). So I just made a character that was the diametric opposite of that description. I'm very dubious of people making what clearly look like flawed inferences from marketing data. 'Games with female characters had never sold before; therefore games with female characters will not sell.' This was the logic of the marketing department at the time, but how many good mainstream games had been made with female characters before Tomb Raider? (Metroid doesn't really count because the fact that Samus is a girl was a twist at the end of the game.) In comparison to the vast number of games with male leads, there just wasn't enough data to come to the conclusion they had reached.

NP: After the first Tomb Raider, you left Lara behind for a while. Why did you leave, and what compelled you to return to the series?

TG: I left because I didn't like Lara being marketed in a sexist way. One of the important points of the character (at least in-game) was that she was given a sense of dignity. When marketing had her bending over, looking at the camera coquettishly and making smutty jokes, I thought that it denigrated the work I'd done. Since there was no way for me to affect the marketing choices at the time, I simply left with the goal to find a way to keep more control over the marketing of any new games I designed.

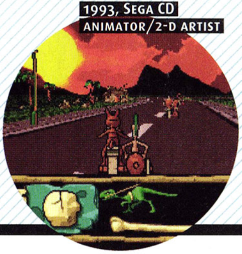
NP: In the interim, you started an independent studio and created an original title called Galleon. What did you learn from that experience?

TG: More than I could fit in this paragraph. I'm still

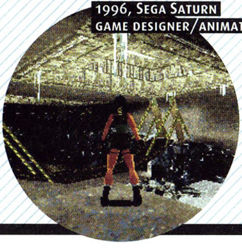
GAMEOGRAPHY

The first game Gard worked on was a little-known (but quite decent) cartoon racer for the Sega CD. Since then, he's focused on 3-D adventures with a strong sense of exploration and top-notch platforming.

BC RACERS
1993, SEGA CD
ANIMATOR/2-D ARTIST



TOMB RAIDER
1996, SEGA SATURN
GAME DESIGNER/ANIMATOR



"I'm fascinated by stories in relation to games. I think that we have a long way to go in that area."

learning from that experience; it gives me a very specific point of reference to compare the industry to. I'm still exceptionally proud of that game and of the people who worked on it. It was flawed, but it was doing things that were way ahead of its time (though with graphics that looked behind the times).

NP: Most fans agree that the Tomb Raider franchise was on the decline until Legend turned things around. It's not very often that a long-running series is able to pull off such a comeback. What was the key in this instance?
TG: The Tomb Raider development juggernaut had condemned Core to making a sequel every year. This meant that they had no time to innovate, so review scores began to nose-dive as people got the odd feeling that they were just playing mission packs. The relentless release schedule must have burned out the people working at Core as well, provoking them to do crazy things like killing her off. When they were finally given the time to really rewrite the game for Angel of Darkness, they just went off the rails. Maybe they were just so sick of making TR games they decided to make a stealth RPG instead and just bodge Lara into it. Either way, they lost sight of the basis of the Tomb Raider games and that was made worse by the fact that the game was released unfinished.

Crystal Dynamics, on the other hand, was fresh to the franchise; they brought the energy and passion back to it. They also brought me back to help understand the real initial starting point of the series and the motivations behind Lara, who had been represented incredibly inconsistently over the later course of the Core games.

NP: In your mind, what does Lara represent for the medium?
TG: I hope it was a meaningful step forward in showing more empowered women in games.

NP: How do you feel about the role of female protagonists in video games? Has there been improvement in recent years?
TG: There are signs of hope. I loved the portrayal of Jade in Beyond Good & Evil. That was such a great game. Sadly, those more progressive roles are fairly infrequent.

NP: What are your thoughts on the Tomb Raider movies? How do you feel video games as a whole lend themselves to film adaptations?
TG: Video game stories are shackled by the simplicity of the interactions within them. There's no point in adding a deep and complex story to a game where the main character's only interaction is to shoot things. If you do that, the story feels bolted on to the experience.

The right way to add story into games is by writing the story around the interactions in the game. The story of Ico, for instance, was the story of a boy and a girl trying to escape a castle. You played that story—you didn't just watch it in cut scenes.

Games that are being turned into films seem mostly to be shooting games—e.g., Doom and Resident Evil. I think it's a shame that a medium like film, which suffers none of the story restrictions that are intrinsic in games, ends up making the same brainless stories that games are forced to by picking games to adapt that had little depth in the first place.

NP: When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
TG: Coming up with new inventive ways to do things is never the problem. For me, the problem is deciding to use an idea from another game instead of adding some fantastic, original solution that your team has come up with because you know that the people playing will probably prefer something familiar over something that is unfamiliar. Finding the balance between those competing goals seems the hardest to me; it's got to be original enough to be interesting, but not too original, or no one will buy it.

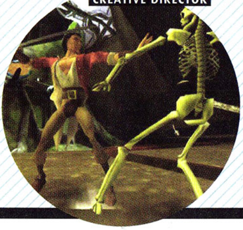
NP: What types of games do you want to work on moving forward?
TG: I'm fascinated by stories in relation to games. I think we have a long way to go in that area. We are so bad at it, in fact, that many people want to be able to skip the story elements entirely. A lot of people argue that games are like toys and therefore story is irrelevant. But what is the first thing a child does when picking up a toy? They immediately begin to construct some form of narrative. It's how we think. It's how we learn. Other than Ico, Half Life 2, and Shadow of Colossus, there are very few examples of games that successfully integrate story.

NP: Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
TG: I'm particularly interested in directors at the moment because I have become focused on cinematic direction in recent years. I'm floored by Spielberg's flawless technique, and I am in awe of Michel Gondry's inventiveness. The Coen brothers, Jeunet and Caro, and Zhang Yimou are all fantastic at creating incredible worlds that are not quite our own. Then there is James Cameron, who just knows pacing like no one else.

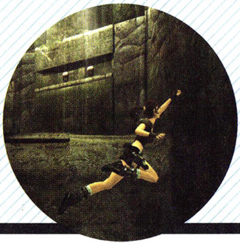
NP: What are some of your favorite nongaming hobbies or pastimes?
TG: I like to write, but I never seem to get a novel finished. I also practice Tai Chi, which I find very helpful for relaxing and staying fit. It's harder than it looks. Besides, I can hang out with all the grandmas in the park!

NP: If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
TG: Qing Gong—lightness kung fu. I'd like to do that fly-by-wire stuff without the need for wires. Then I could just run into work over the roofs of buildings. Nice!

GALLEON
2004, XBOX
CREATIVE DIRECTOR



TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND
2006, GAMECUBE
CREATIVE CONSULTANT



TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSAR
2007, WII
STORY DESIGN/
CINEMATIC DIRECTOR

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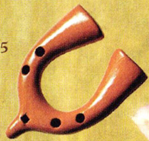

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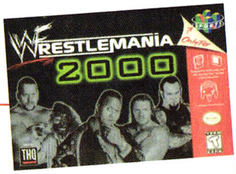
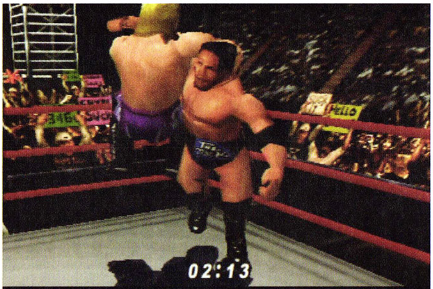
WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000



AKI's first WWF game proved that they were the masters of the squared circle.



Sure, WrestleMania 2000's graphics don't look so hot by today's standards, but they get the job done. Hey, at least you can tell it's The Rock.

Platform: **N64**
Developer: **AKI**
Publisher: **THQ**
Release Date: **November 1999**
Covered In Issues: **122, 123, 125, 127, 135**
Number of the Rock's Fans:
Millions...and millions

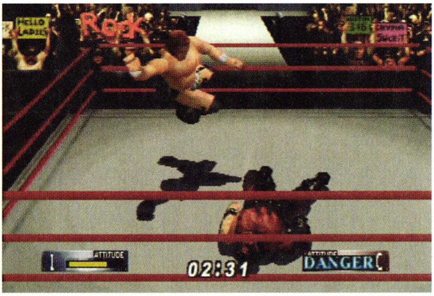
Back in the mid-to-late '90s, professional wrestling had a sort of renaissance: WCW and WWF (as it was known before the World Wildlife Fund won their lawsuit, forcing the World Wrestling Federation to change their name to World Wrestling Entertainment) were in a heated ratings war, with wrestlers like Bill Goldberg and Stone Cold Steve Austin leading the charge for their respective companies. This was a time when wrestling games, particularly on the Nintendo 64, were at their best—all thanks to a company named AKI.

See, AKI—the developers of the N64 hits WCW vs. nWo World Tour and WCW vs. nWo Revenge—was *the* company for wrestling games. (In fact, some would argue that they still are, even though they haven't made a game since 2006's Def Jam Fight for NY: The Takeover for the PSP.) The easy-to-learn controls and the four-player action of those N64 games made it a snap for you and your friends to replicate the moves you saw on TV every week without physically hurting each other.

The two things that AKI's previous WCW titles lacked were the WWF license—which was especially important since the WWF had reclaimed the title of top pro wrestling promotion by this time—and a create-a-wrestler mode. Both issues were addressed in WrestleMania 2000, with spectacular results. Now you could recreate wrestlers who were not on the WWF roster at the time (like Bret "The Hitman" Hart or the aforementioned Goldberg), or create completely original ones and pit them against the likes of Stone Cold, Triple H, or The Rock.

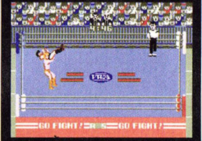
Looking at the game today, it's definitely dated, with several superstars that are no longer with the company for one reason or another; a limited create-a-wrestler mode (especially compared to modern-day wrestling titles like the WWE SmackDown games); and blocky, jaggy graphics that don't really hold up very well.

That said, WrestleMania 2000 is an undeniably fun game. I play it to this day, and it's one of the reasons that I still keep my N64 hooked up to my TV. Sure, most gamers prefer the more contemporary N64 sequel, WWF No Mercy, but I personally prefer the streamlined simplicity and faster pace (read: less slowdown) of WrestleMania 2000. Regardless of your preference, though, the fact remains that AKI is still the reigning champ of wrestling games, and we can only hope that they make another one sooner rather than later. —**Justin C.**



THE BEST OF THE REST

Okay, so we all know the AKI wrestling games are superb, but are there any other wrestling games worth playing? As it turns out, yes! From the early days on the NES to the more modern consoles, there are great wrestling games aplenty. Listed below are four of our favorites.



Pro Wrestling (NES): The one that started it all for Chris Sl. "A winner is you" is still one of his favorite words of wisdom.

WrestleFest

WWF WrestleFest (Arcade): Steve T. fondly remembers playing as Earthquake in this arcade game; ironically, he's not an Earthquake fan.

WWF Royal Rumble

WWF Royal Rumble (SNES): Chris H. likes this arcade-y wrestling game for SNES.

Independent World

Fire Pro Wrestling (GBA): It doesn't have any official licenses, but that doesn't matter when the actual wrestling is so good.

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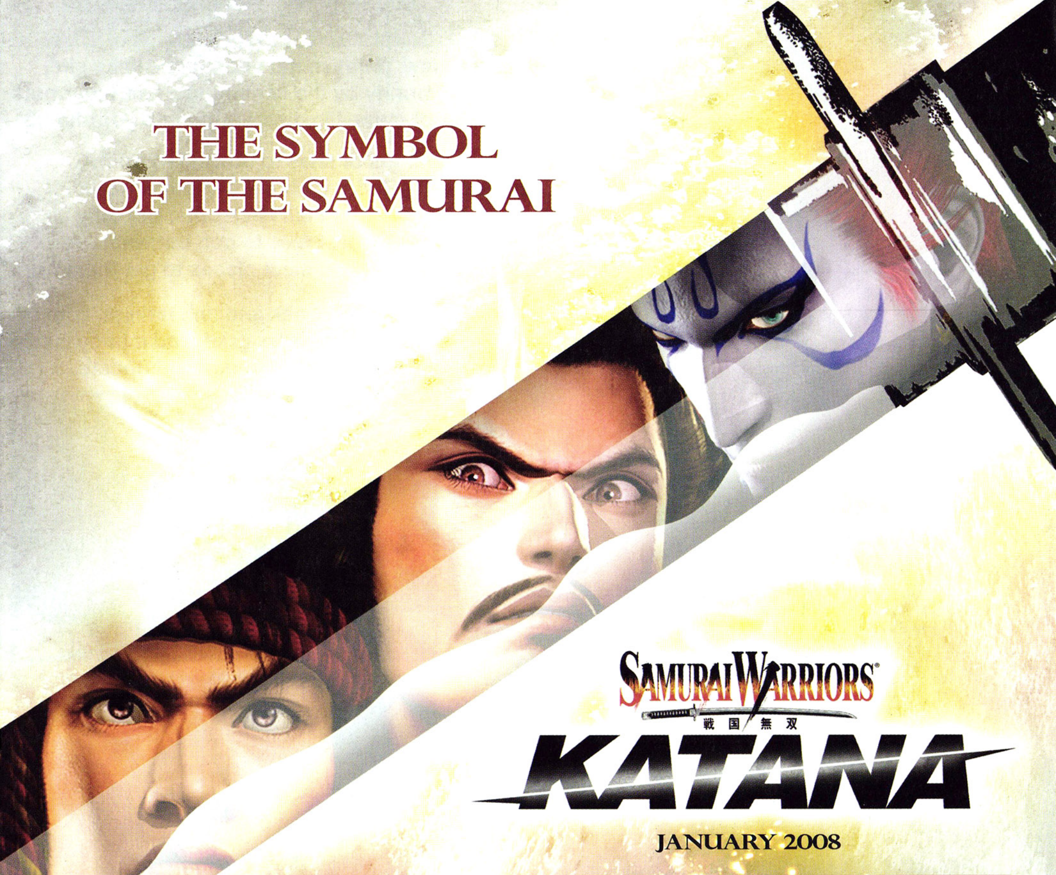
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3625
01'58

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MISSION
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7194
26
02'09
ACTION SHOOTING

Fire projectiles to eliminate enemy ninja. Shake the Wii Remote™ and Nunchuk to run past deadly traps.

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01'23
Reach the goal before your opponent!
01'23

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Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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Wii

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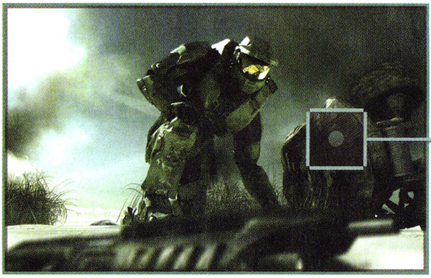

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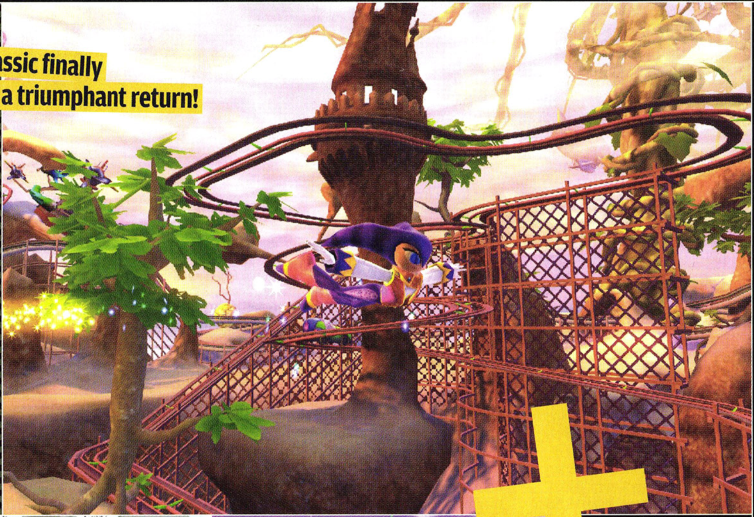
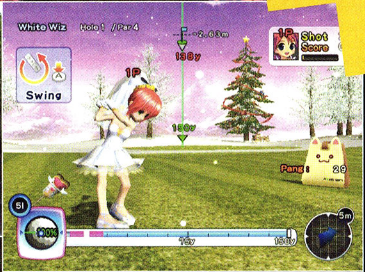


The Sega classic finally makes a triumphant return!

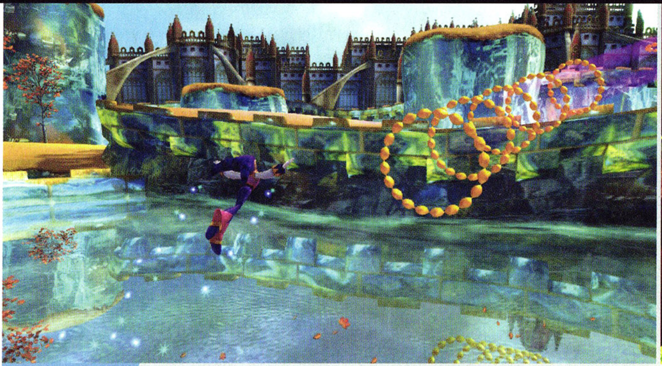

White Wiz
Hole 1 / Par 4
Swing
1P
Shot Score
Pang
75y
150y
5m

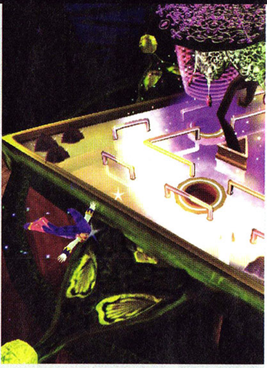
NiGHTS, Samurai Warriors: Katana, Super Swing Golf Season 2, and more.

87
Does the Wii remote make a good sword in Samurai Warriors: Katana?

87
Are Warhammer 40,000 fans in for a treat with Squad Command?

89
Will Harvey Birdman win over a jury of tough Wii gamers?





DREAM DELIGHT

GOLDEN SLUMBER

NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SONICTEAM**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

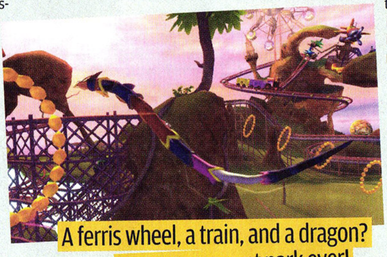
Pinch me; I must be dreaming. More than 10 agonizing years after the release of the first NiGHTS for Sega Saturn, fans finally have the sequel we've been clamoring for. So was it worth the wait? The answer, I'm delighted to say, is a resounding "Yes." Director Takashi Iizuka and his team have hit one out of the park, delivering a follow-up in every way worthy of its legendary predecessor. Journey of Dreams once again captures that dreamlike sensation of flight brilliantly as you lead its whimsical purple jester soaring through a collection of wonderfully imaginative dreamscapes. It's not the type of experience that can easily be related to anything else you've played, so especially for those unfamiliar with the first game, it takes a little getting used to. Once you're locked in, though, this is one of the most purely joyful experiences to be had on a video game console.

Much of that joy stems from the beautiful sights and sounds. With its vibrant colors and huge, magnificently realized environments, Journey of Dreams possesses some of the best visuals the Wii has to offer. Plus, SonicTeam has managed to iron out the frame rate issues that plagued early versions of the game, leaving the final product to run nice and smooth. But it's the music that steals the show. The first game's soundtrack is one of the all-time greats, and the orchestral score for Journey of Dreams is an equally inspired piece of work that blends evocative new themes with remixed tracks sure to elicit sweet pangs of nostalgia. This is the rare soundtrack that stays with you long after the game's been placed back on the shelf.

Careful not to stray too far from what made the original so special, Journey of Dreams retains the same core sensibilities. Flight is on rails, and there's a heavy focus on acrobatics and chaining together combos by snagging blue spheres and flying through rings. While simply completing each level is fairly easy, the real fun comes from trying to earn the best score possible, learning the ins and outs of each level and discovering its many secrets. It's a game that becomes increasingly rewarding as you improve your skills, and once you get in the zone and start racking up huge combos, it proves incredibly addictive. Some may bemoan the game feeling so similar to its predecessor, but I think the developers have shown admirable restraint. They've taken the essence of what made the first game so special, and carefully built on it in ways that make sense. Each stage now consists of five missions, and the various objectives mix things up by providing new and interesting riffs on the core mechanics. You'll need to loop around friendly Nightopians to save them from being sucked into a black hole, for instance, or fly by musical notes at just the right speed to play the classic NiGHTS theme song. Besides, it's not like we've been inundated with comparable experiences over the past decade.

Like the first game, Journey of Dreams does have its share of flaws—some of the voice acting is questionable, the on-foot levels are a bit dull, and the motion controls disappoint (steering NiGHTS with the analog stick works much better)—but the whole is somehow greater than the sum of its parts. This was obviously a labor of love for the development team—something that goes beyond the nuts and bolts of typical game design. If you give yourself to it, Journey of Dreams is a powerful reminder of what makes this art form so special. All of your worries just seem to melt away as you're drawn into a fantasy world bristling with creativity.

So on second thought, don't pinch me. I'm having way too much fun. —**STEVE T.**



A ferris wheel, a train, and a dragon? Best amusement park ever!

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT'S YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I vow to personally ensure that Smash Bros. Brawl comes out in 2008. When it does, please send gifts to Chris Hoffman c/o Nintendo Power.

CHRIS SHEPPERD

My New Year's resolution is the same as it is every year: catch up on my backlog of games. Fat chance, again.

GEORGE SINFIELD

I've leaned on SpellCheck for far too long. My resolution is to learn how to put letters together to form correctly spelled words.

STEVE THOMASON

I plan to tour the country, espousing the virtues of Zack & Wiki and NiGHTS. When I show up at your door, it's only polite to offer me cookies.

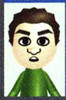
SCOTT PELLAND

I resolve to find and recruit every possible ally in Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn. That should keep me busy for most of 2008.

JUSTIN CHENG

I resolve to play more games. Yes, I said *more* games. There are just too many great games on the horizon, and I want to play them all!

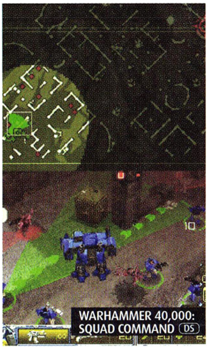
CHRIS ANTISTA



I resolve to come up with some rechargeable battery solution for my Wii. No amount of Galaxy is worth not having a working smoke detector.

TOM HOLOIEN

I'm once again making a resolution to work out. This time I mean it, because my Wii arm isn't strong enough for an all-night Smash session.



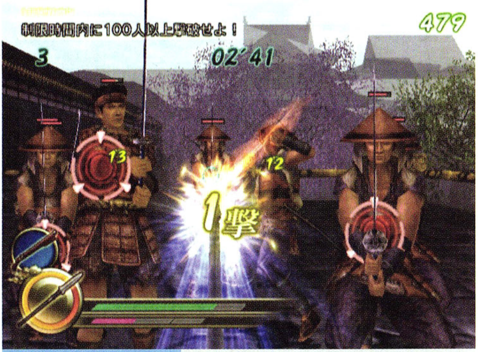
WARHAMMER 40,000: SQUAD COMMAND (DS)

WARHAMMER 40,000: SQUAD COMMAND

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Red Lynx
ESRB: Teen

"In the grim darkness of the far future there is only war," predicts the tag line of Warhammer 40,000, Games Workshop's collectible-figurine strategy game. The DS version, subtitled Squad Command, reduces Warhammer's traditionally expansive armies to small squads of Space Marines and other unit types. A simple but flexible movement and combat system based on allocating Action Points is at the heart of the turn-based action. More than a dozen missions will challenge solo players, but Squad Command's claim to fame will likely be its multiplayer modes, including Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection matches for up to eight players, multicard LAN battles, and a single-card download option. Notably, players are limited to 90-second turns to keep battles fast-paced, and destructible environments spread collateral damage, adding another tactical twist. Squad Command smartly separates the live battle scene from a comprehensive map on either of the DS's dual screens, and both stylus and button controls are intuitive. Less rosy, distinguishing units in the gloom is often a chore, and the game can bog down during single-player battles while the enemy AI ponders moves. But if an enthusiastic online community embraces Squad Command, fans may not consider the future so grim after all. —Scott P.



FIRST-PERSON SLASHER

SHARPENING THE BLADE

SAMURAI WARRIORS: KATANA

RATING: 7.5

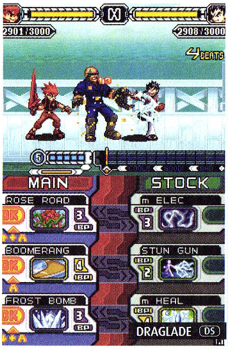
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Koei
DEVELOPER: Omega Force
ESRB: Teen

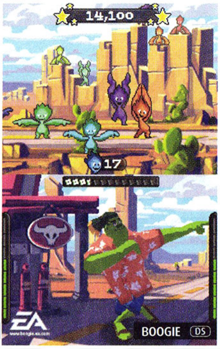
The past 10 years have seen over 20 entries into the Dynasty Warriors/Samurai Warriors series, but the last time that we saw something really new was...well, about 10 years ago. I was pleasantly surprised, then, when I popped in Samurai Warriors: Katana to find that it is a completely fresh approach to the series.

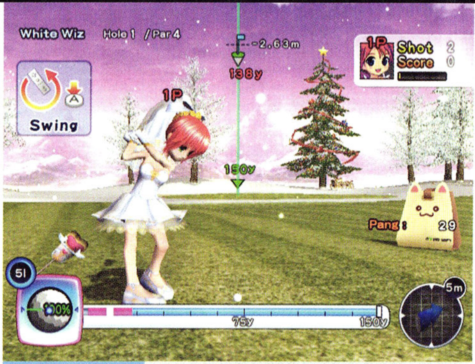
The most notable differences are the game's new first-person view and its unique half-FPS, half-hack-n-slash gameplay. The trademark "you versus an army" battle system has been reworked to make full use of the Wii's unique controls, and it works surprisingly well. Attacks are performed either by pointing your Wii remote at an enemy and pressing a button (A for melee, B for ranged) or by swinging or thrusting the remote for stronger attacks. Different weapons have different control schemes, so changing weapons actually changes the feel of the game. Blocking is given a high priority, as it allows you to counterattack and expose enemies' weaknesses. The action is a refreshing change from the franchise status quo, and the wide variety of attack options keeps combat from growing repetitive too quickly.

Although you're still essentially hacking your way through enemy after enemy, the game mixes things up once in awhile. Usually your movement through a level is on rails, but some missions give you partial or total control of your character to complete special objectives. Katana's missions are short, which means more variation and less frustration when you fail, and the Trial and Versus modes often give you tasks that go far beyond simple hacking and slashing.

Samurai Warriors: Katana is fun, and it makes good use of the Wii's motion controls without being tiring. It doesn't take too long to beat, but you'll be playing it a lot longer than you would if it were just another standard game in the series. —Tom H.







DRAGLADE

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Nintendo DS**
PUBLISHER: **Atlus**
DEVELOPER: **Dimps**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

Billed as a "rhythm fighting game," anime-style action title Draglade does incorporate note-driven fighting moves into the fray, but they're hardly the focus of an intense battle. The game's Beat Combos take too much time to pull off to be effective and, moreover, are easier to execute if you just mash buttons than if you try to follow the rhythm of the notes that slide across the screen. That being said, the game's Grapping (yes, that's "Grapping," not "grappling") matches are well-executed rumbles that don't need a rhythm gimmick to be fun. The jumping-and-slashing controls are perfectly responsive and they give you the freedom to double-jump and attack while in the air. Plus, you can equip your Grapper with six (of 100 available) Bullets; some enhance your stats; others let loose bombs, lasers, and other heavy weaponry. Three Bullets are available to you at the touch of a button. Three others wait in reserve and can be added to the mix with a tap of the touch screen. The use of Bullets, Beat Combos, and regular fighting moves is a tad complex, but not overly so, and you don't have to be a fighting-game expert to progress.

Separate stories follow the trials of four heroes, each one associated with a different element (fire, water, earth, or lightning), as they venture to become Major Grappers and overcome an enemy force. Traditional left-to-right scrolling levels are mixed in with single-screen fights. You can go on a few side missions, but you can't wander around and build up your levels to make advanced fights easier. A story's conclusion unlocks an additional character for multiplayer battles (and CPU Vs. training bouts). You can fight against another player, go on a co-op mission, or trade Bullets and Beat Scores via local wireless connection. You can also enter battles via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection and try to achieve national ranking. The game offers a lot, and it's all well-tuned. Just don't expect the publicized music element to be a big part of your playing experience. —**George S.**

BOOGIE

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Nintendo DS**
PUBLISHER: **Electronic Arts**
DEVELOPER: **EA Montreal**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

It's pretty uncommon for a handheld version of a game to be significantly better than the console version, but that's the situation with Boogie. The DS game replaces Wii shakin' with rhythmic touch-screen gestures, but otherwise it's the same characters, songs, and simplicity. But Boogie on the DS excels by reining in the freestyle elements that made the Wii game way too easy—you have to follow onscreen instructions more carefully, and the scoring system is less forgiving. Seemingly inaccurate touch-screen recognition will test your patience, but after a while you'll find the controls' sweet spot. Kudos to the DS for being able to pump out pretty darn good audio—mediocre Fergie and Britney Spears covers have seldom sounded so good on a handheld. —**Chris Sh.**

LINKS TO THE PAST

PAR FOR THE COURSE

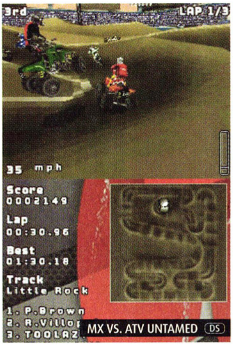
SUPER SWING GOLF SEASON 2

RATING: 6.5

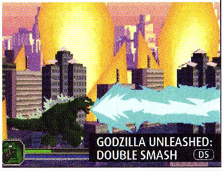
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **Tecmo**
DEVELOPER: **Ntreev/Team Tachyon**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

Like its predecessor, Super Swing Season 2 offers a lighthearted, reasonably enjoyable game of golf that combines an exaggerated, arcade-style approach to the sport (á la Mario Golf and Sony's Hot Shots series) with well-executed Wii controls. Swinging the remote as you would a golf club feels immensely satisfying, and even beginners can jump in and compete right away using a special set of clubs that compensates for any tendency to hook or slice (though at the expense of some power). The fantastical settings—which range from ancient pyramids to active volcanoes—won't appeal to everyone, but the course designs are excellent for the most part, with lots of tempting shortcuts situated deviously between hazards. The game also boasts a bountiful selection of single- and multiplayer modes, as well as tons of unlockable goodies (including costumes from Tecmo classics like Rygar and Mighty Bomb Jack) that provide added incentive to keep playing.

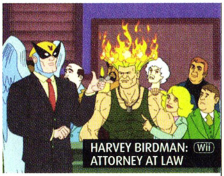
The biggest thing preventing me from giving Season 2 a stronger recommendation is that so much of the content is recycled from the previous game. In fact, this comes across as more of an expansion pack than a true sequel. There are only three new courses, and the most significant new addition—the story-driven Tour mode—suffers from a pretty banal presentation. It seems like the developers could have done so much more with the game's outlandish characters and settings. The continued lack of online play is also disappointing, especially given the franchise's beginnings as a network-centric PC phenomenon. This is a solid game that simply doesn't do enough to separate itself from its predecessor. —**Steve T.**



MX VS. ATV UNTAMED (DS)



GODZILLA UNLEASHED: DOUBLE SMASH (DS)



HARVEY BIRDMAN: ATTORNEY AT LAW (Wii)

HARVEY BIRDMAN: ATTORNEY AT LAW

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: High Voltage
ESRB: Teen

Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law is funny, unique, and remarkable for how accurately it re-creates the Cartoon Network show that it's based on, but Phoenix Wright doesn't have to worry about anyone stealing his spotlight just yet. While Harvey Birdman looks and sounds authentic, and the game's bizarrely offbeat stories (custom-made for the game) will keep you entertained, there's not much happening in the gameplay department. You don't feel like you're participating in the proceedings so much as pointing and clicking—often randomly—to watch cut-scenes unfold. Even the most advanced cases feel shallow, and the game's on the short side; you'll blow through it in just a few hours. Nonetheless, fans of the *Harvey Birdman* show should get a kick out of its Wii incarnation, as will Capcom die-hards thanks to a number of Street Fighter cameo appearances. —Chris H.

GODZILLA UNLEASHED: DOUBLE SMASH

RATING: 3.0

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Santa Cruz Games
ESRB: Everyone

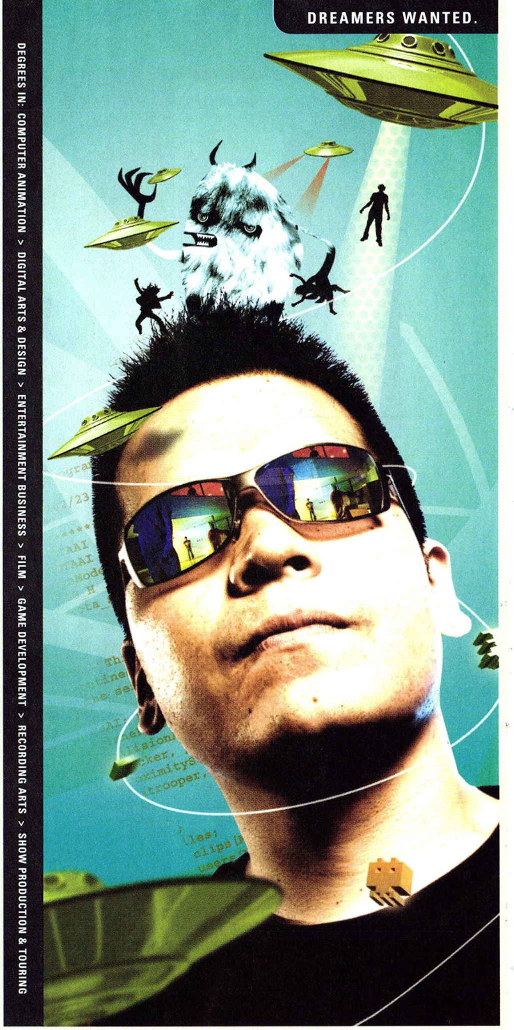
The slow descent in quality of Godzilla games has finally hit rock bottom. Despite a robust mythology and a horde of badass monsters, Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash still manages to deliver ugly and uninspired gameplay. In this side-scroller, your creatures swat down planes and tanks on both the upper and lower screen; you switch back and forth at your leisure, and the monsters you're not controlling disappear, out of danger. It's the definition of monotony—the only divergence is the occasional boss battle or dumb button-combo event. Double Smash tries to lure you into playing more with a considerable amount of unlockable goodies, but a few concept stills and an extra mode aren't enticing enough. —Chris Sh.

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Tantalus
ESRB: Everyone

If the title MX vs. ATV throws down a challenge, the winner is MX all the way. If you try to land an ATV from a jump at an angle to start a hairpin turn, you'll spill every time, but an MX bike can handle the maneuver with ease. Luckily, you can limit the field to a single vehicle type and class for the game's three X-Cross Tournament and Stunt Challenge cups. In single-player events, the AI-controlled racers stay in such a tight pack (all three finishing within a second of each other at times) that you'll likely end up either in first place or dead last. Multiplayer events (for up to four participants via wireless connection) are more evenly competitive. —George S.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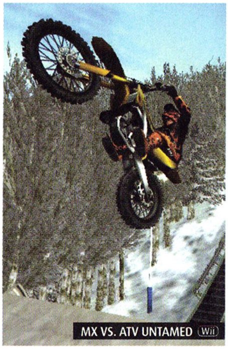
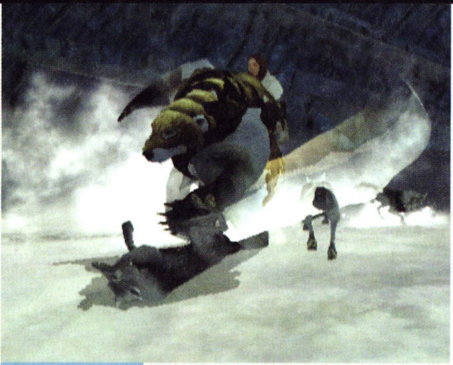
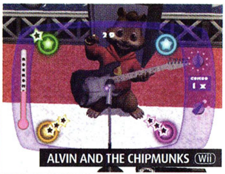
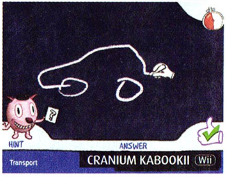


MX VS. ATV UNTAMED (Wii)





ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS (Wii)



CRANIUM KABOOKII (Wii)

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **Rainbow Studios**
ESRB: **Everyone**

In spite of all the unwieldy mud-pounding and extreme sports 'tude, MX vs. ATV Untamed definitely has control on its mind. Beyond the ability to choose between dirt bikes, monster trucks, and four-wheelers, you're given three different control options. Wii steering wheel support is here, but most will decide between the traditional scheme or tilt steering. Sure, you'll feel right at home taking corners with the analog stick, but the game appears to be designed in favor of motion controls. Similar to Excite Truck, seesawing the controller, while somewhat difficult to master, ultimately offers vastly superior steering. It can't hold a candle to the nunchuk in terms of landing airs or cranking out stunts, though. Either way, flicking the remote to pre-load jumps works fantastically in most cases.

Most of the vehicles have an awkward, weightless feel, and it's all too easy to buck yourself off your gas-guzzling steed. True to the sport, staying on-course is difficult. But off-track penalties are harsh and unrelenting, which leads to a lot of frustration during online sessions (for up to 8 players). There's plenty of modes here, but outside of a freestyle ski jump, it mostly amounts to muddy track after muddy track. Motocross fans may dig what Untamed's shoveling, but the casual racer will want to hold out for a certain Kart game on the horizon. —Chris A.

#1 THREAT: BEARS

FOOL'S GOLD

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

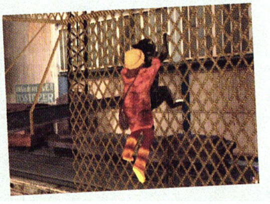
RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **Sega**
DEVELOPER: **Shiny**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

I haven't read the book, and the movie isn't out as of this writing, but based on what I've played, maybe *The Golden Compass* just isn't very well suited to being a video game. Characters and story seem to be the property's strong suit, but the folks at Sega and Shiny were unable to turn the narrative into compelling gameplay. Somewhere during the game's development, someone should have realized that playing a series of minigames to engage in conversation, answer questions, interact with objects, and clean up bird poop isn't very fun. It's bad enough that most of the minigames are overly simple and arbitrary, but even worse is that they completely ignore the one thing that could have made them passable: Wii's motion-sensing controls.

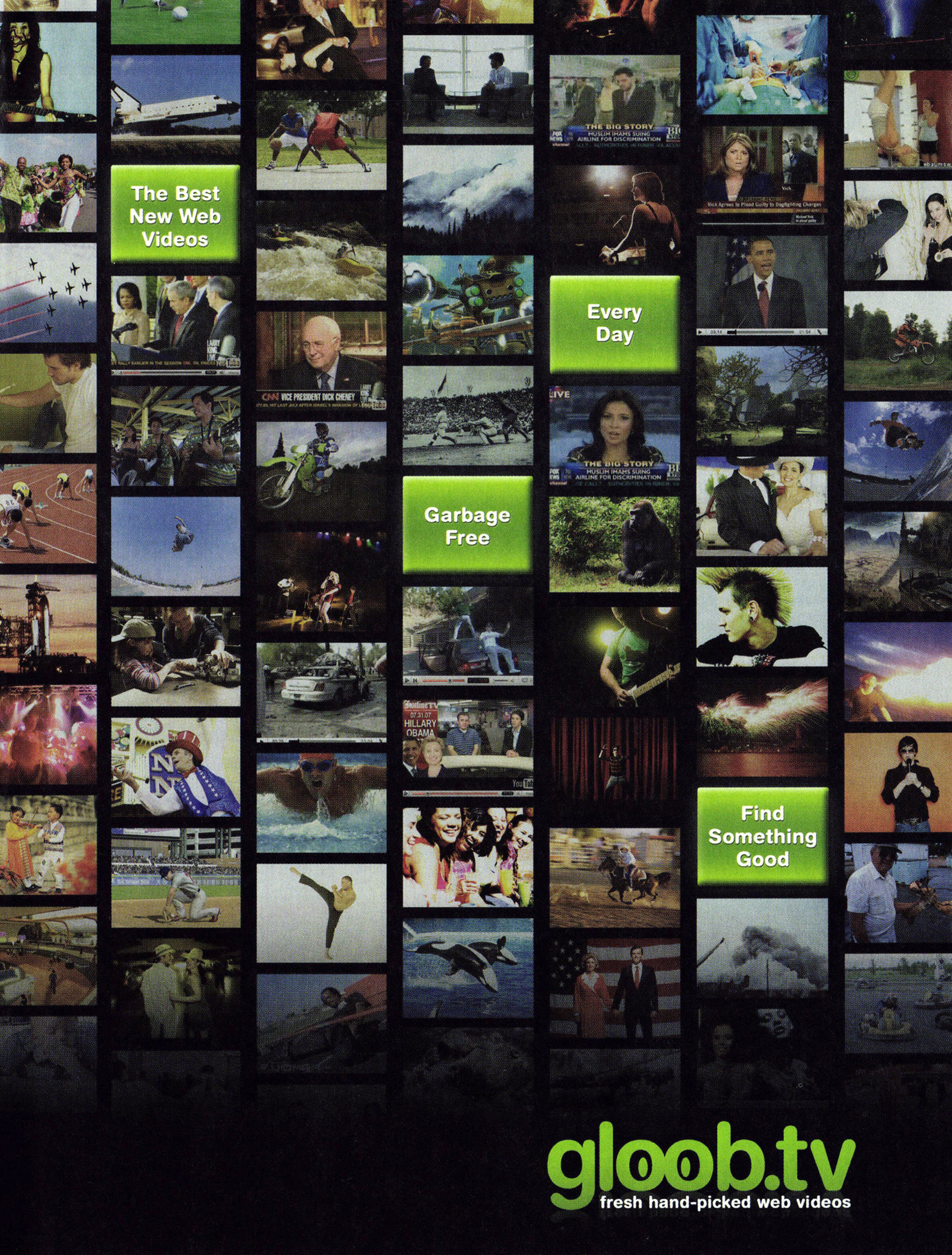
The good news is that there's much more to The Golden Compass than just talking and mopping up poop; the bad news is that the game's other aspects aren't much better. Though the combat scenes in which you play as Iorek the bear are sloppy and unresponsive (it's a chore to simply turn around), brutally tossing humans around is a somewhat cathartic respite after the dull exploration areas. The game's platforming sections fare a bit better thanks to heroine Lyra's multiple animal-based abilities, but the pedestrian level design and imprecise character movement render the action mediocre at best.

Top-notch presentation would have helped compensate for some of the game's weaknesses, but it fails in that regard, too—the low-res visuals look like they were downscaled from more-powerful hardware and rushed out the door. Even the story falls apart by game's end—it concludes in the most abrupt and unsatisfying way possible. What happened? Did Shiny just run out of time to finish the game? Considering the quality (or lack thereof) of the rest of the game, I wouldn't be surprised. —Chris H.



ALSO THIS MONTH

We didn't have space to review all the new releases this month, but plenty of additional titles are on their way to stores. Sleeper hit **Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords** is brining its mix of puzzles and role-playing to Wii. . . . Wanna hit something? Then take a swing at **Showtime Championship Boxing**. . . . For a less-violent sport, aim for the net in **Kidz Sports: Basketball** for Wii. . . . Casual gamers can check out Midway's **Game Party** for Wii, which features seven diversions like table hockey and trivia. . . . Also on tap from Midway: **Cruis'n** for Wii, the latest in the arcade-style racing series. . . . Test your racing skills in **Indy 500 Legends** for DS as well. . . . If brain-teasers are your thing, there are plenty of new options to choose from. You can go all ambidextrous in **Left Brain, Right Brain** for DS, get creative in **Cranium Kabookii** for Wii, or put your spelling skills to the test in **Wordjong** for DS. . . . Just in time for the movie, **Alvin and the Chipmunks** for Wii will let you perform rodent rock to songs such as Heartbreak Hotel. . . . Another longtime kid-favorite property returns in **Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake** for DS. . . . The American Girl property also goes interactive on DS in **American Girl: Julie Finds a Way**. . . . Is there any end in sight for Yu-Gi-Oh? Millions of fans hope not. The latest, **Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship 2008** is landing on DS.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RULER OF THE GALAXY

Oh, Super Mario Galaxy, how we love thee. At 9.5, Mario's latest and greatest enters the upper echelon of Wii games, but rarely has there been a score so hotly debated among the NP staff—many thought the game deserved an elusive 10. But Galaxy wasn't the only high-scoring recent release; Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles (Wii), Trauma Center: New Blood (Wii), and Mario Party DS (uh . . . DS), among others, scored very well. M-rated Dementium: The Ward (DS) could be the season's sleeper sensation—it earned an 8.5.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Wii				
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	216	E10+
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	7.0	Buena Vista	212	E10+
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	7.5	Majesco	216	E
Cosmic Family	N/A	Ubisoft	215	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	7.0	Atari	211	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
• Elebits	7.5	Konami	212	E
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
Far Cry: Vengeance	4.0	Ubisoft	212	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
The Godfather: Blackhand Edition	8.0	Electronic Arts	216	M
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Heatseeker	7.5	Codemasters	215	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	N/A	Sierra	212	E10+
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kororinpa: Marble Mania	7.0	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6.0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Meet the Robinsons	6.5	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Need for Speed: Carbon	6.0	Electronic Arts	212	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4.5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Rapala Tournament Fishing	N/A	Activision	212	E
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Sonic and the Secret Rings	8.5	Sega	214	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Spider-Man 3	6.0	Activision	217	T
SSX Blur	8.5	Electronic Arts	215	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
Super Paper Mario	9.5	Nintendo	216	E
Super Swing Golf	7.5	Tecmo	212	E
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
TMNT	5.0	Ubisoft	215	E10+
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	7.5	Activision	212	E10+
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
WarioWare: Smooth Moves	9.0	Nintendo	212	E
Wii Play	7.0	Nintendo	213	E
Wing Island	5.5	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
World Series of Poker: Tournament of Champions	N/A	Activision	212	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO GAMECUBE				
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	9.5	Nintendo	212	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Radio Allergy	5.0	0~3	215	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
TMNT	N/A	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Tomb Raider: Legend	7.5	Eidos	211	T
NINTENDO DS				
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
Brain Boost: Beta Wave	N/A	Majesco	212	E
Brain Boost: Gamma Wave	N/A	Majesco	212	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania	5.5	Majesco	216	E

REVIEWER NOTES

SUPER MARIO GALAXY

Super Mario Galaxy is very possibly the best game I've played since becoming a professional game reviewer. Every level contains something new and incredibly creative, and playing around with gravity is just fun. I don't want to say that Chris Shepperd doesn't know what he's talking about when he failed to give the game a 10, but... wait, yes I do. He doesn't know what he's talking about, and he hates fun and puppies. —**Chris H.**

>MY WORD COACH

To proffer that it's not for everyone would be an understatement of prodigious proportions, but if you aspire to ameliorate your vocabulary (or annoy your readers), My Word Coach is an efficacious application. —**Steve T.**

BLEACH: THE BLADE OF FATE

Whenever I see the Treasure logo at the beginning of a game, my right thumb twitches in anticipation for a strenuous workout. Though Treasure's DS Bleach title does feature masterful action for the fighting game aficionado, it's also nice to newcomers with single-tap-triggered attacks on the touch screen. If you're a fan of the Bleach series, but you're intimidated by multi-button combos, The Blade of Fate will ease you into the fighting genre painlessly. —**George S.**

Title	Score	Publisher	Vol.	ESRB
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Cartoon Network Racing	N/A	The Game Factory	213	E
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
• Custom Robo Arena	7.5	Nintendo	215	E10+
Death Jr. And The Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
• Diddy Kong Racing DS	7.5	Nintendo	213	E
• Digimon World DS	N/A	Namco Bandai	212	E
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru Densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
F-24 Stealth Fighter	3.5	Majesco	215	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales	7.0	Square Enix	216	E
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Fossil League D.T.C.	N/A	D3PA	214	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy	7.0	Destineer	212	T
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	8.0	Nintendo	213	T
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Inuyasha: Secret of The Divine Jewel	6.0	Namco Bandai	213	E10+
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	6.5	Atlus	213	E10+
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	N/A	Buena Vista	214	E10+
Kirby: Squeak Squad	7.5	Nintendo	212	E
Konami Classics Series: Arcade Hits	7.5	Konami	214	E10+
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	8.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 2	5.0	Konami	215	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Lunar Knights	8.0	Konami	213	E10+
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
• Marvel Trading Card Game	4.0	Konami	213	T
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Meteos: Disney Magic	7.5	Buena Vista	214	E
Monster Bomber	N/A	Majesco	212	E
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy/D3PA	217	E10+
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All	9.0	Capcom	212	T
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pogo Island	7.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
• Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	9.0	Nintendo	216	E
Pokémon Ranger	7.0	Nintendo	210	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour:Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
Puzzle Quest:Challenge of the Warlords	4.0	D3PA	215	E10+
Quickspot	5.5	Namco Bandai	214	E10+
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rafa Nadal Tennis	N/A	Codemasters	213	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• Rune Factory:A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	7.0	SNK Playmore	215	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
• Spectrobes	8.0	Buena Vista	214	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	6.0	Activision	212	E10+
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	7.0	Ubisoft	212	E10+
Steel Horizon	4.5	Konami	214	E10+
Theme Park	6.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Time Ace	6.5	Konami	216	E10+
TMNT	5.5	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Trioncube	5.5	Namco Bandai	213	E
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
Wario: Master of Disguise	6.5	Nintendo	214	E10+
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
• Winning Eleven Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	6.5	Konami	213	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
Xiaolin Showdown	5.0	Konami	212	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Spirit Caller	N/A	Konami	213	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2007	N/A	Konami	215	E
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Back to Stone	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	214	E
Final Fantasy VI Advance	9.5	Nintendo	213	E10+
Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	N/A	Crave Entertainment	213	E
Ghost Rider	N/A	2K Games	213	T
Mazes of Fate	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	213	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E
Polarium Advance	N/A	Atlus	212	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
TMNT	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+
Yggdra Union	7.5	Atlus	211	T

LINK'S CROSSBOW TRAINING

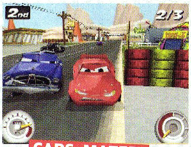
Chris Shepperd was dead-on in his review last month—this game is very simple and short. Still, I personally don't see Link's Crossbow Training as a 6.5. During my family's big holiday parties I got to see both hardcore gamers and new Wii dabblers become enthralled with this game. They spent hours trying to beat each others' scores and had a blast with the new Zapper. As a freebie game that comes with a $20 peripheral, what more could we realistically ask for?

—Chris Sl.

>DEMENTIUM: THE WARD

The words "scary" and "DS" don't typically go hand-in-hand, but Dementium: The Ward proves that truly frightening survival horror can be done on the handheld. Shame about the poor save system and same-y level design, though.

—Justin C.



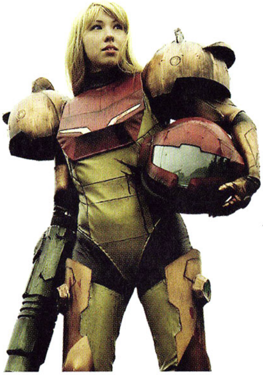
CARS: MATER-NATIONAL (DS)

I was pleasantly surprised by the smooth, simple controls, familiar setting—races take place in and around Radiator Springs—and nice voice work on this junior-league racer for Nintendo DS. A single-card multiplayer option makes it even more inviting. Definitely consider this one for young racing fans. Ka-chow!

—Scott P.

FANATICS

Samus in Scandinavia



Meet Jenni Källberg, the Metroid fan who set game blogs on fire with the world's coolest Samus costume.

We had to go halfway around the world to find this month's cosplay creator. Artist/designer Jenni Källberg lives in Sweden, and is responsible for one of the coolest Samus Aran costumes we've seen. Jenni started making her own outfits at around age 14 in sewing class, mostly of anime characters. When she turned 18, she started making the 40-mile trek into Stockholm to anime conventions to wear her new costumes. It became such a frequent trip that she decided to move there after a year so that she could make more costumes and attend more events. All told, she's made around 20 costumes. That's dedication! Jenni chose Samus not only for her love of the Metroid series ("It's one of my favorite games ever," she says), but also for its creative demand. "I wanted to make something challenging for this year's anime convention UppCon," Jenni says. "The costume is made from PVC fabrics for the suit, and foam and cardboard for the armor." Jenni worked on the Samus costume for around six months, but it was slow going at first. "I just worked on it occasionally in the first few months, then almost every day in the last two months," she shares. What does Jenni plan to do next? "I've just finished a Zero Suit costume, and after that I have two Nintendo-themed costumes in mind for what I want to do next. One of them is Zelda, and the other one is Peach," she says. We can't wait to see them! —**Chris Sh.**

Jenni shows off her amazing Samus costume, complete with damage from a recent scrap with some Space Pirates.

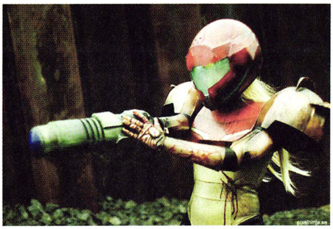
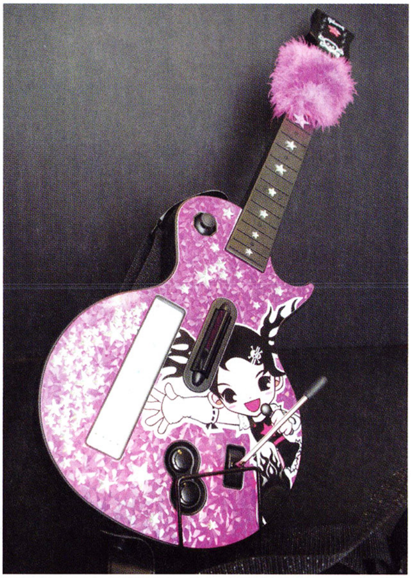


PHOTO CREDIT: CARL OSCAR AARO



MOD JOB

Heroes of Hero

Guitar Hero continues to take the world by storm, and even the people at Nintendo of America are getting swept up in it. NOA's design department (the folks responsible for box art and manual design, among other things) decided to put their GH love on display in the form of custom-crafted guitars. The group modded three guitars, all of which will be auctioned off at NOA's annual in-house charity auction. We don't wanna get in trouble with the makers of the other two axes, but the pink guitar (made by the department's female designers) is our personal favorite. —CHRIS SH.

Even the folks at Nintendo are just fans when it comes to Guitar Hero.

FANDOM

Iconic Collection

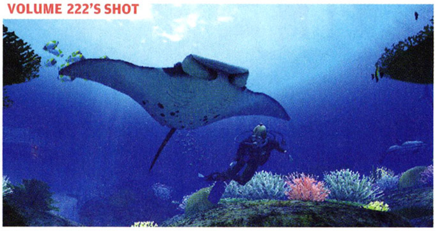
You know those cute little icons next to the game name when you boot up your DS? It's OK if you can't conjure up an image of them offhand– most of us just tap the game title as soon as it pops up. But Stumpokapow, a prolific member of the prominent NeoGAF gaming forums, finds the 32-by-32-pixel icons pretty fascinating, so he started assembling a complete set of them on his web page. It's a work in progress—he's continually adding more and cleaning up accidental duplicates. Not only is the site pretty cool looking; it's fun to see how many of the icons you can identify. You can check out the collection at http://images.stumpnet.net/games/dsicons/. —CHRIS SH.

SCREEN TEST

Buzz Worthy

Our readers dove deep to find some real treasure for Volume 222's Endless Ocean screenshot—see their captions below. This month, we're throwing you guys and gals a tough one with a tricky Super Mario Galaxy screen. Put on your thinking cap and email your best caption to screentest@futureus.com.

VOLUME 222'S SHOT



"Umm, excuse me. Do you mind? I'm trying to find Nemo." —Commander Kiddo

"I'm gonna need a bigger net…" —Stephen L.

"You should have seen the thing. It was so ugly that I almost…it's right behind me, isn't it?'" —Jamie M.

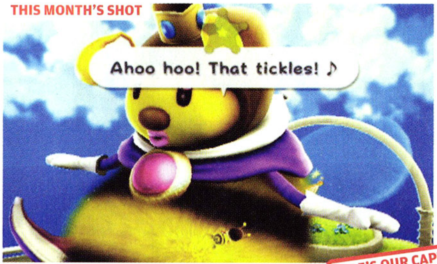
"Wild Mantine appears." — a3levan

"Ray: 'Does this ocean make me look fat?'" —Sarah B.

"I can't get this kick me sign to stay stuck to the diver's air tank…" —Sir Dweeb

"After the TV producer canceled his show, Aquaman exacted horrible vengeance." —Skullkid

THIS MONTH'S SHOT



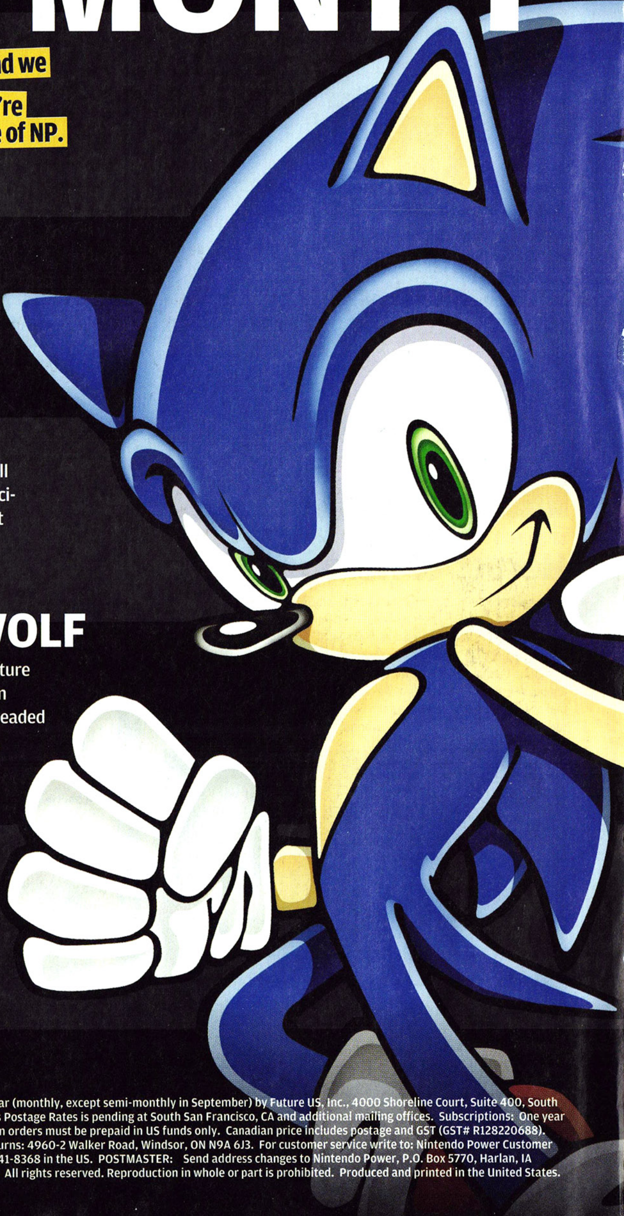
Dr. Mario delivers a vitamin Bee injection.

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. Think you can do better?

February 2008 Vol. 225

NEXT MONTH

February is the month of love, and we heart our readers so much we're preparing another titillating issue of NP.



SONIC'S NEXT ROLE

After months of speculation, we'll finally pull back the curtain on one of 2008's most anticipated DS titles with an exclusive first look at Bioware's Sonic RPG.

HUNGRY LIKE A WOLF

Wii owners looking for the next great adventure will want to check out our in-depth report on Capcom's brilliantly artistic Okami, finally headed to Nintendo's console with all-new controls.

DARK ON THE HORIZON

We'll also shed some light on the Wii version of survival-horror spine-tingler Alone in the Dark following our exclusive hands-on time with the game.

Nintendo Power (ISSN 1041-9551) is published 13 times a year (monthly, except semi-monthly in September) by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at South San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: $24.95; Canada $29.95. Canadian orders must be prepaid in US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R128220688). Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement #40043631. Returns: 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. For customer service write to: Nintendo Power Customer Care, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270, or call: 1(866) 941-8368 in the US. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Nintendo Power, P.O. Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Entire contents copyright 2007, Future US, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. Produced and printed in the United States.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing video games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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For the cartoon visit:
www.toei-anim.com

For the game visit:
onepiece.namcobandaigames.com

TEEN
T
Alcohol Reference
Cartoon Violence
Mild Language
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

JANUARY 2008

Wii™

TOEI ANIMATION

BANDAI NAMCO Games™

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